



THE
POOR MAN'S PRESERVATIVE

AGAINST

Popery :

ADDRESSED TO THE LOWER CLASSES OF
GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

BY THE

REV. JOSEPH BLANCO WHITE,

FORMERLY CHAPLAIN TO THE KING OF SPAIN, IN THE ROYAL CHAPEL OF
SEVILLE ;

NOW A CLERGYMAN OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

THE THIRD EDITION.

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*The Author makes no Profit by this Pamphlet, in order that it may be sold  
at the lowest possible price.*  
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TO THE READER.

MY FRIEND,

WHOEVER you may be who happen to take up this book, if you belong to that numerous and respectable class who cannot afford to employ a great part of their time in reading, and have not the means of buying but very cheap works—it is for *you* that I have written the one which you now hold in your hands.

Who I am, I will tell you presently; for I mean, by your favour, to hold a pretty long conversation with you; but let me speak first about this little book. I wrote, a few months ago, a work on the Roman Catholic Religion, which, as I hear from

the booksellers, has had a good sale among the rich. I might, indeed, rest satisfied with this success, if, even at the time when I was working hard with my pen, a whisper within had not said to me—"Are you sure that the prospect of gain or praise is not the real cause of all this labour?"—"I am well aware (said I) that *the heart is deceitful above all things**, and that, sure as I feel of the purity of my motives, yet something may be wrong in them. I will, however, with God's blessing, if this book should be well received, write another for the poor. I will give it away to be printed for them at the cheapest rate, and will make no profit at all by it. I will take care, besides, that it contain, in a small compass, more than my work for the higher classes; and it shall be written in a manner that will require no learning to be well understood."—My book, as I have told you already, was published, and the great people were pleased to say that I had proved my point. Then letters came to me from some very worthy gentlemen, urging me to

* Jeremiah xvii. 9.

print a cheaper edition of my work, that it might be within the power of the poor to buy it.—I was thankful indeed for this piece of advice: but my mind had been previously made up to go beyond it. It cheered me up, however, and I immediately set about composing this little work on purpose for *you*.

But when I took up the pen I was very undecided as to the manner which would best afford you both instruction and entertainment. After casting many schemes in my mind, it appeared to me, that by imagining myself sitting by your side, and entering into a conversation upon the subject which I propose to treat, I should make the reading of this book less tiresome, than if I wrote in the usual way, and had all the talk to myself, in set chapters. I mean, therefore, to give you a share in the composition of the work itself: and though it is impossible for me to guess exactly what you would say if we were conversing together, I hope that the questions and remarks which I shall put in your mouth, will be such as you would

not be sorry to have used, and not very unlike those which your own mind would suggest.

Let us, then, if you please, begin our first conversation, or *Dialogue*; in which you will bear the name of *Reader*, and myself that of *Author*: and may God bless the result to both of us.

Chelsea, July, 1825.

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DIALOGUE I.

Containing an Account of the Author ; how the Errors of the Roman Catholic Church made him an Infidel ; and how, to avoid her Tyranny, he came to England, where the knowledge of the Protestant Religion made him again embrace Christianity.

Reader. WELL, Sir, since you are pleased to wish for a conversation with me, may I make bold to ask who you are ?

Author. By all means, my good friend. The truth is, that, unless you know who I am, and by what strange and unforeseen events I happen to be here, our conversation would be to little purpose. You must, then, know, in the first place, that I am a Spaniard, and have been regularly bred and ordained a Catholic Priest.

R. Indeed, Sir ! Perhaps you are one of those poor creatures, who, I hear, have been driven out of Spain, for having tried to give it a better government.

A. No, my friend : I have been now (1825) more than fifteen years in England, and came hither of my own accord, though I left behind every thing that was most dear to me, besides very good preferment in the Church, and the prospect of rising to higher places of honour and emolument.

R. Why, Sir ! that appears strange.

A. So it must to those who are not acquainted with the evil from which I resolved to escape, at the expence of every thing I possessed in the world. You, my dear friend, have had your lot cast in a country which is perfectly free from *religious tyranny*. Were it possible for you to have been born in Spain, and yet to possess the free spirit of a *Briton*, you would not wonder at the determination

which made me quit parents, kindred, friends, wealth, and country, and cast myself upon the world at large, at the age of five and thirty, trusting to my own exertions for a maintenance. All this I did merely to escape from *religious tyranny*.

R. You quite surprise me, Sir! But I wish you would tell me what it is you mean by that *religious tyranny*, which you seem to have feared and hated so strongly.

A. You will easily understand it as I proceed with the story of my own life. I was born of gentle parents, and brought up with great care and tenderness. My father's family were Irish, and the English language being spoken by him and many of his dependants, I learned it when a boy; and thanks to that circumstance, which I consider as a means employed by Providence for my future good, I can now thus freely converse with you. Both my father and mother were Roman Catholics, extremely pious from their youth, and devoted to works of charity and piety during the whole course of their lives. It was natural that such good parents should educate their children in the most religious manner; and they spared themselves no pains to make me a good Roman Catholic. My disposition was not wayward; and I grew up strongly attached to the sort of religion which was instilled into my mind. I had scarcely arrived at my fourteenth year, when believing that the life in which I could most please God was that of a Clergyman, I asked my parents to prepare me for the Church; which they agreed to with great joy. I passed many years at the university, took my degrees, and, at the age of five and twenty, was made a Priest. It is the custom in Spain, when certain places become vacant in Cathedrals, and other great Churches, to invite as many Clergymen as will allow themselves to be examined, before the public, to stand candidates for the vacancy. After the trial of their learning, the

judges appointed by law give the place to him whom they believe to be most competent.—I should be ashamed to boast, but so it happened, that, soon after my becoming a Priest, I was made one of the Chaplains of the King of Spain, in the way I have just told you.—All had been, hitherto, well enough with me; and I thank God that the ease and good fortune which had always attended me, did not make me forget my duties as a Clergyman.—Doubts, however, had occurred to me now and then, as to whether the Roman Catholic Religion was true. My fear of doing wrong by listening to them made me hush them for a long time; but all my peace of mind was gone. In vain did I kneel and pray: the doubts would multiply upon me, disturbing all my devotions. Thus I struggled month after month, till unable to answer the objections that continually occurred to me, I renounced the Roman Catholic Religion in my heart.

R. In your *heart*, Sir! I hope you do not mean that when you had settled with yourself that the Popish Religion was false, you pretended still to be a Roman Catholic.

A. What would you think of a power or authority, that would force you to act like a hypocrite?

R. I should think that it was no better than the government of the Turks, which, as I hear, treats men like beasts.

A. Well; now you will be able to understand what I mean by *religious tyranny*. The Popes of Rome believe that they have a right to oblige all men who have been baptized, but more especially those who have been baptized by their Priests, to continue Roman Catholics to their lives' end. Whenever any one living under their authority, has ventured to deny any of the doctrines which the Church of Rome believes, they have shut them up in prisons, tormented them upon the rack, and, if they would not recant, and unsay what they had given

out as their real persuasion, the poor wretches have been burnt as heretics. 'The Kings of Spain, being Catholics, acted upon these matters according to the will of the Pope; and, in order to prevent every Spaniard from being any thing, at least in appearance, but a Papist, had established a court called the *Inquisition*, where a certain number of Priests tried, in secret, such people as were accused of having denied any of the articles of the Roman Catholic faith. Whenever, moved by fear of the consequences, the prisoner chose to eat his own words, and declare that he was wrong; the Priests sent him to do penance for a certain time, or laid a heavy fine upon him: but, if the accused had courage to persist in his own opinion, then the Priests declared that he was a heretic, and gave him up to the public executioner, to be burnt alive.

R. Good heaven! you quite astonish me. Have you ever seen such doings, Sir?

A. I well remember the last that was burnt for being a heretic, in my own town, which is called *Seville*. It was a poor blind woman. I was then about eight years old, and saw the pile of wood, upon barrels of pitch and tar, where she was reduced to ashes.

R. But are there many who venture their lives for the sake of what they believe to be the true Gospel?

A. Alas! there was a time, when many hundreds of men and women sacrificed themselves for the love of the Protestant Religion which is professed in England. But the horrible cruelties, which were practised upon them, disheartened all those who were disposed to throw off the yoke of the Pope; and now people disguise their religious opinions, in order to avoid the most horrible persecution.

R. And you, Sir, of course, were obliged to disguise your own persuasion, in order not to lose your liberty and your life?

A. Just so. I lived ten years in the most wretched and distressed state of mind. Nothing was wanting to my being happy but the liberty of declaring my opinions; but that is impossible for a Roman Catholic, who lives under the laws which the Popes have induced most of the Roman Catholic princes to establish in their kingdoms. I could not say, as a Roman Catholic may, under the government of Great Britain and Ireland, "I will no longer be a spiritual subject of the Pope: I will worship God as my conscience tells me I should, and according to what I find in the Bible." No: had I said so, or even much less; had any words escaped me, in conversation, from which it might be suspected that I did not believe exactly what the Pope commands, I should have been taken out of my bed in the middle of the night, and carried to one of the prisons of the Inquisition. Often, indeed, very often have I passed a restless night under the apprehension that, in consequence of some unguarded words, my house would be assailed by the ministers of the Inquisition, and I should be hurried away in the black carriage which they used for conveying dissenters to their dungeons. Happy indeed are the people of these kingdoms, where every man's house is his castle: and where, provided he has not committed some real crime, he may sleep under the protection of a mere latch to his door, as if he dwelt in a walled and moated fortress! No such feeling of safety can be enjoyed where the tyranny of Popery prevails. A Roman Catholic, *who is not protected by Protestant laws*, is all over the world a slave, who cannot utter a word against the opinions of his Church, but at his peril. "The very walls have ears," is a common saying in my country. A man is indeed beset with spies; for the Church of Rome has contrived to employ every one as such, against his nearest and dearest relations. Every year there is publicly read at Church a proclamation, or (as they call it) a *bull* from the Pope,

commanding parents to accuse their children, children their parents, husbands their wives, and wives their husbands, of any words or actions against the Roman Catholic Religion. They are told, that whoever disobeys this command, not only incurs damnation for his own soul, but is the cause of the same to those whom he wishes to spare. So that many have had for their accusers their fathers and mothers, without knowing to whom they owed their sufferings under the Inquisitors; for the name of the informer is kept a most profound secret, and the accused is tried without ever seeing the witnesses against him.

R. I am perfectly astonished at the things you say, Sir; and did I not perceive by your manners that you are a gentleman, I should certainly suspect that you were trying to trepan us poor unlearned people.

A. I neither wonder, nor am offended at your suspicion. All I can say to remove it is, that I am well known in London; that for the truth of every thing you have already heard, and will hear from me, I am ready to be examined *upon oath*; and that there are many hundreds of Spaniards at this moment in England, who will attest every word of mine about the Inquisition of the Pope in Spain. I say the Inquisition of the Pope, because that horrible *court of justice* was established, kept up, and managed by and under the Pope's authority. And now I must add one word as to the effects of the Pope's contrivance to make spies of the nearest relations, against those who might not believe every tittle of the Roman Catholic Religion. I have told you that my parents were good and kind. My mother was a lady whom all the poor of the neighbourhood loved for her goodness and charity; and indeed I often saw her denying herself even the common comforts of life, that she might have the more to give away. I was her favourite child, being the eldest; and it is

impossible for a mother to love with more ardent affection than that she showed towards me. Well, as I could not entirely conceal my own mind in regard to Popery, she began to suspect that I was not a true Roman Catholic in my heart. Now, she knew that the Pope had made it her duty to turn informer even against her own child, in such cases; and dreading that the day might come, when some words should drop from me against the Roman Catholic religion, which it would be her duty to carry to the judges, she used to avoid my company, and shut herself up, to weep for me. I could not, at first, make out why my dear mother shunned my company; and was cut to the heart by her apparent unkindness. I might to this day have believed that I had lost her affection, but that an intimate friend of her's put me in possession of the state of her mind.

R. Upon my word, Sir, you give me such horror of Roman Catholics, that I shall in future look with suspicion on some neighbours of mine of that persuasion.

A. God forbid that such should be the consequence of my communication with you. The Roman Catholic religion in itself, and such as the Pope would make it all over the world, if there were no Protestant laws to resist it, is the most horrible system of tyranny that ever opposed the welfare of man. But most of the Roman Catholics in these kingdoms are not aware of the evils which their religion is likely to produce. They have grown up under the influence of a constitution, which owes its full freedom to Protestantism; and many of them are Protestants in feelings, whom their priests, I am sure, must lead with a very light rein-hand, for fear of their running away. There is, indeed, no reason for either fear or suspicion, with regard to the Roman Catholics of these kingdoms, as long as both the Government and Parliament remain purely Protest-

ant; but I would not answer for the consequences if the Pope, through his priests, could obtain an underhand influence in either.

R. But, Sir, I want to know the rest of your own story, and how, though obliged to appear outwardly a Roman Catholic, you settled within yourself what you were to believe.

A. I will not delay to satisfy your curiosity, though that part of my story is the most painful to me. At all events, you will be sure, when you hear it, that I am telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, since I do not spare myself. —You must know then, that from the moment I believed that the Roman Catholic religion was false, I had no religion at all, and lived without God in the world.

R. I am sorry to hear that, Sir. But surely you might have tried some other Church before you became an Infidel.

A. Ah, my honest and worthy friend, your expressions deserve my praise, though I feel humbled and rebuked by their truth. Yet you forget that I was in a country where the Roman Catholic religion played its accustomed game of *Christ with the Pope, or no Christ*. The first thing that a true Roman Catholic teaches those who grow under his care is, that either all that the Church of Rome believes is true, or all that is contained in the Scripture is false. To believe that the Church of Rome can be, or is wrong in one single article of her creed, is, according to that Church, the same as to disbelieve the whole Gospel. That is the reason why, in the countries where the Roman Catholic religion is strictly observed, every one who rejects Popery in his heart, looks immediately upon Christianity as a fable.

R. Pardon me, Sir, I do not mean to offend you; but I should wish to know if you still continue of the same opinion, and believe with Hone and Carlisle,

and all that kind of people, whose books are sometimes secretly sold among country-folks, that there is no truth in the Bible.

A. I am so far from being of that mind, that I do humbly and earnestly pray to God he will rather deprive me of every temporal comfort, and make my sufferings in this world equal to those of the most unhappy wretch that ever breathed, than withdraw from me his grace, whereby I believe in his Son Jesus Christ, and hope, through his merits, for eternal salvation.

R. I have not the heart to say *Amen* to the first part of your prayer, though I cordially join in the last. But will you have the goodness to inform me how it was that you came to believe again in the Bible, in spite of your former opinions? For I have often heard a neighbour of mine, who frequently boasts that he is an infidel, say, that the man whose eyes are once (as he calls it) open about the Bible, can never be made again to believe in it.

A. I wish I could relate my own history to that neighbour of yours. Perhaps, by God's mercy, he might himself use some of the means which Providence has employed in my own conversion. Of one thing I feel quite assured on this point, that if by God's grace, which always assists the honest inquirer after religious truth, your infidel neighbour would abstain from open sin, and pray daily to his Maker, (for I hope he has not gone so far as to deny the being of a God) to lead him into the truth, he would soon become a sincere Christian. But I will proceed with the account of myself. When I had in my own mind thrown off all allegiance to the Christian religion, though I tried to enjoy myself, and indulge my desires, I could find neither happiness nor comfort. My mind was naturally averse to deceit, and I could not brook the necessity of acting publicly as the minister of a religion which I believed to be false. But what could I do? As for wealth

and honours, heaven knows they did not weigh a straw against my love of manly openness and liberty. I once, indeed, went so far as to write to a friend who lived at Cadiz, and whom, after many years' absence, I have lately seen in London, to procure me a passage to North America, whither I wished to escape; trusting to my own labour for subsistence. But when I looked round and saw my dear father and mother on the decline of life: when I considered that my flight would bring their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, tears would gush into my eyes, and the courage which I owed to anger melted at once into love for the authors of my being. Ten years of my life did I pass in this hot and cold fever, this ague of the heart, without a hope, without a drop of that cordial which cheers the very soul of those who sacrifice their desires to their duty, under the blessed influence of religion. At last it pleased God to afford me a means of escaping from the tyranny of the Pope, and make me willingly and joyfully submit to the easy yoke of his blessed Son Jesus Christ. The ways of Providence for my change appear so wonderful to me, that I feel almost overcome when I earnestly think upon them. In the first place, it was certain that I could not leave Spain for a Protestant country, without giving a death-blow to my parents. Could any human being have foreseen, in the year 1807, that in 1810, my own father and mother would urge me to leave my country for England? And yet, so it came to pass. You have heard how Buonaparte entered Spain with the design of placing his brother Joseph upon the throne of that country; how for a time he seemed to have obtained his wishes when his armies advanced till they came within view of Cadiz, and threatened to extinguish the last hope of the Spaniards. I was at that time at Seville, my native town. As the French troops approached it, all those who would not submit to their government, and had the means of re-

moving to another place, tried to be beforehand with them, by taking their flight to Cadiz. My parents could not abandon their home; but as they abhorred the French troops, and hated the injustice of their invasion, they were anxious that I should quit the town. Here I saw the most favourable opening for executing my long delayed plan for escaping the religious tyranny under which I groaned; and pretending that I did not feel secure at Cadiz, prepared in four days, to leave my country for England. I knew it was for ever; and my heart bleeds at the recollection of the last view I took of my father and mother. A few weeks after I found myself on these shores.

R. Indeed, Sir, I think you did right. Poor as I am, had I known your case when you arrived, I would have shook you by the hand, and welcomed you to my cottage.

A. If I should tell you all the gratitude I feel for this country, and my sense of the kindness and friendship with which I have met from the moment I landed, you might suspect me of flattery.—But how different appeared England to me from what I had imagined it to be!

R. What, Sir, did you fear that we should behave rudely to a foreigner who came for shelter among us?

A. No, indeed; that was not my mistake. I found England as hospitable and generous as it had always been described to me. But one thing I found in it which I never expected; that was true and sincere religion. I have told you that in Popish countries people are made to believe that whoever is not a Roman Catholic is only a Christian in name. I therefore supposed that in this Protestant country, though men appeared externally to have a religion, few or none would care any thing about it. Now observe the merciful dispensations of Providence with regard to me. Had I upon my first arrival

fallen in with some of your infidels, I should have been confirmed in all my errors. But it pleased God so to direct events as to make me very soon acquainted with one of the most excellent and religious families in London. I had in my former blindness and ignorance, believed that since in Spain, which is the most thoroughly Roman Catholic country in the world, the morals in general are very loose; a nation of Christians only in name, (for such was my mistaken opinion of you) would be infinitely more addicted to vicious courses. But, when I began to look about me, and observed the modesty of the ladies, the quiet and orderly lives of the greatest part of the gentry, and compared their decent conversation with the profane talk which is tolerated in my country, I perceived, at once, that my head was full of absurd notions, and prepared myself to root out from it whatever I should find to be wrong. In this state of mind I went one Sunday to Church, out of mere curiosity; for my thoughts were at that time very far from God and his worship. The unmeaning ceremonies of the Roman Catholics had made me sick of Churches and Church Service. But when in the course of the Prayers, I perceived the beautiful simplicity, and the warm heartiness, if I may say so, of your Prayer-book, my heart, which for ten years had appeared quite dead to all religious feelings, could not but show a disposition to revive, like the leafless trees when breathed upon by the first soft breezes of spring. God had prevented its becoming a dead trunk: it gave indeed no signs of life; but the sap was stirring up from the root. This was easily perceived in the effect which the singing of a hymn had upon me that morning. It begins—

When all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise.

The sentiments expressed in this beautiful hymn penetrated my soul like the first rain which falls upon a thirsty land. My long impious disregard of God, the Father and supporter of my life and being, made me blush, and feel ashamed of myself; and a strong sense of the irrational ungratefulness in which I had so long lived, forced a profusion of tears from my eyes. I left the Church a very different man from what I was when I entered it; but still very far from being a true believer in Christ. Yet, from that day I began to put up a very short prayer every morning, asking for light and protection from my Creator, and thanking him for his goodness. It happened about that time that some books concerning the truth of religion—a kind of works in which this country excels all others—fell in my way. I thought it fair to examine the matter again, though I imagined that no man could ever answer the arguments against it, which had become quite familiar to my mind. As I grew less and less prejudiced against the truth of Divine Revelation, I prayed more earnestly for assistance in the important examination in which I was engaged. I then began a careful perusal of the Scriptures, and it pleased God, at the end of two years, to remove my blindness, so far as to enable me with humble sincerity to receive the Sacrament according to the manner of the Church of England, which appeared to me, in the course of my enquiries, to be, of all human establishments, the most suited, in her discipline, to promote the ends of the Gospel, and in her doctrines, as pure and orthodox as those which were founded by the Apostles themselves. It is to me a matter of great comfort that I have now lived a much longer period in the acknowledgment of the truth of Christianity, than I spent in my former unbelief.

R. You have indeed great reason to thank God. But have you never had any doubts about our Church, since you became a member of it?

A. Never, my friend, as compared with the Roman Catholic. I am so fully persuaded that the doctrines properly called Popish, and which make the real difference between Protestants and Romanists, are false, that they would shake my faith in the Gospel, if any one could prove to me, that they are part of it. That I am sure can never be done: and since I learnt to separate the chaff of Rome from the true grain of Christ, I have never turned my back on my Master and Redeemer. I will, however, confess to you, that several years after I embraced the Protestant Religion, I was strongly tempted in my faith; not, however, as I said before, from any leaning to Popery, but from a doubt whether the doctrine of the people called *Unitarians*—I mean those who say that Christ was nothing but a man, the son of Joseph and Mary—might not be true. This was a very severe trial to me; for as I had so long renounced the Christian faith, my mind required an uncommon assistance of Divine Grace, to prevent it from relapsing, like a person recovered out of a long illness, into my old habits of unbelief. In this state of doubt, but without any rash positiveness on either side (for, thank God, my past errors had made me well acquainted with my weakness), I carefully examined the Scriptures, never omitting to pray to the Almighty that he would make me acquainted with the truth. Clouds of doubt hovered, a long time, over my soul, and darkness increased now and then in such a degree that I feared my Christian faith had been extinguished. Had I, in consequence of this disposition to unbelief, returned, as is often the case, to a course of immorality, nothing could have saved me from a relapse into infidelity. But the grace of God was secretly at work in me, and whatever doubts I had about the doctrines of the Gospel, I never deemed myself at liberty openly and wilfully to offend against its commandments. I sincerely wished to find the truth;

and though in my distress I felt often inclined to doubt again the truth of Revelation, my knowledge of the vanity and flimsiness of infidelity, made me turn to Christ, and say (I can assure you I often uttered the words aloud in tears), "To whom shall I go? thou hast the words of eternal life*." Partly from these doubts, and partly from a long and lingering illness which the change of climate had brought upon me, I passed the greatest part of a year without receiving the Sacrament. Had I, as far as it was my own fault, abstained much longer from that appointed means of grace, I fear I should have fallen a second time from the faith; but, by God's mercy, I examined myself upon that point, and finding that my conscience did not charge me with any true impediment to the reception of the Holy Sacrament; and that, as to the doubts on my mind, they were involuntary, and accompanied with a sincere desire of finding the truth, I presented myself at the Sacramental table, with feelings, similar to those which I conceived I should have, if, as it was then probable, death had sent me with my doubts, before the judgment seat of Christ. I threw myself, in fact, wholly upon his mercy. My trust was not in vain: for calm was soon restored to my soul; and I found myself stronger than ever in the faith and profession which I made when I became a member of the Church of England. You see, my friend, that I disguise not my weakness from the world. You may suppose, that for a man who has spent his whole life in the pursuit of learning, it must be very mortifying to publish so many errors, so many doubts, in a word, to shew the utter feebleness of his mind and soul, when unsupported by Divine Grace. But I conceive this to be a duty which I owe to the truth of the Gospel, and to the spiritual welfare of my fellow-creatures. How happy

* John vi. 68.

should I be if the humblest individual, when tempted, should take courage from the knowledge of my case, and cling to prayer whilst he examined, like the noble Bereans, “whether these things were so*.”

R. Sir, I pity what you have suffered; but I must say it comforts me to find that doubts and errors upon religious subjects are not confined to the unlearned.

A. They are not, indeed; on the contrary, the pride of human knowledge is often the rock on which the faith of the higher classes of society is wrecked. It is the true character of the Gospel to be “hid from the wise and prudent, and to be revealed unto babes†;” not that true learning or knowledge is in opposition to spiritual truth, but because the best dispositions for faith are humility and singleness of heart. The appointed ministers of the Church of Christ are indeed commanded to “be able by *sound doctrine* both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers‡,” but, though this direction of the Apostle Paul does not exclude the laity from religious learning, and every man, according to his ability, should make himself acquainted with the unanswerable reasons on which the truth of the Gospel is founded, the saving faith of Christianity requires no book-learning to have its full effect on the heart. Happy indeed are those millions of humble Christians, who, from the publication of the Gospel to our own times, have received the doctrines of the Bible by the simple means of their Catechism, and the instructions imparted by their Christian Pastors, and so ordered their lives as not to wish those doctrines to be false! How infinitely more happy is the lot of these humble Christians, than mine! After spending my whole life in reading; after trying, by ten years’ incessant study, to obtain a complete as-

* Acts xvii. 11.

† Luke x. 21.

‡ Tit. i. 9.

surance that Christianity was a fable, and finding out, at last, by great attention and labour, that such books as engaged to prove it had deceived me; I have to thank God that by his grace, I find myself, as to Christian faith, upon a level with the humblest and most illiterate disciple of Christ, who trusts in his redeeming blood for salvation.—Yet the ways of God are wonderful; and it is not presumptuous to hope that the bitter struggles of my mind may be made the means of confirming the faith of many.

R. I feel assured they will. Without flattering you, Sir, or supposing that your talents or knowledge are above the common run of gentlemen of your class, it stands to reason, that the religion which, after being so many years an unbeliever, you have embraced so earnestly, must have a very strong evidence in support of its truth.

A. So strong, my friend, that whoever takes proper pains to examine it, if he really acknowledge that there is a living God, a Being who concerns himself in the moral conduct of mankind, will never be at rest, till he has either believed in Christ, or succeeded in making himself completely blind and careless upon spiritual subjects, allowing himself to be drifted by the rapid stream of life, without ever giving a thought to the unknown shores on which he is sure soon, very soon, to be cast. The greatest part of those who pretend to believe in a God; and yet reject the Gospel where it is publicly taught without the errors of Popery, do not mean by the name of the Deity any thing like the Supreme Being, the living God, the intelligent Creator of mankind revealed in the Scriptures; but some unknown cause of what we call Nature, to which the good or bad conduct of men is equally indifferent. If it were not so, they could never suppose that a religion like the Christian, supported by proofs so superior to those of all the other religions of the world, so infinitely above them all in the purity of its laws,

and so effectual in allaying the storms of evil passions, and bestowing peace and happiness on the breast that fairly gives it room to act; it is impossible, I say, that a man who really believes in an all-seeing and all-wise God, could at the same time believe *that* religion equally a cheat with all the other superstitions of the world; and that it is indifferent to Him, whether men, who can make the comparison, receive or reject it. This consideration was, my dear friend, my sheet anchor, in the fierce tempest of doubt, which, for a time, threatened to sink my faith after my conversion to Protestant Christianity. When nearly overcome by a multitude of little infidel arguments (for they are all like a swarm of puny insects, and can never form a well-connected band, as the proofs of Christianity do), I turned, in the anguish of my soul, to seek for a resting place, out of the "Rock of ages," Christ the Saviour. The view around me was dismal indeed; a dark gulph, with small spots, every one of which I had tried, and found unable to support me, and from which the fall, I well knew, would inevitably plunge me into the bottomless abyss of *Atheism*. It was in this distress of mind that I exclaimed with the Apostle Peter, *To whom shall I go?* and clung to the Cross of Christ.

R. Your reasons appear to me very strong, and such, that no man who feels a real concern for his soul, can shut his eyes to them. I clearly understand that a living God—a God to whom the man who murders, and he who feeds the hungry, the man who oppresses, and he that protects the orphan and the widow; the man who promotes virtue in his house and neighbourhood, and he who spreads vice and misery for the gratification of his brutal passions, are not equally acceptable, or indifferent; cannot be supposed to have allowed a religious cheat to appear so beautiful and desirable as true Christianity shews itself to every honest and upright

heart. But what have you, Sir, to say to the existence of so many false religions as there are in the world? Would God permit them to exist, to the spiritual ruin of millions of men, if these matters were of real consequence in his eyes?

A. Suppose yourself obliged to penetrate through a dark forest, full of wild beasts and precipices, and crossed by innumerable paths. On the side by which your entrance lies, there stands the son of the king of the country, who with the greatest kindness offers to a great multitude of the new comers a little map, with a clear view of the paths, which, he tells them, must lead to certain ruin; while others are distinctly marked, which if they carefully follow, he promises to meet them at the other side of the perilous wood, and make them rich and happy in his kingdom. You inform yourself, by every possible means, of the character of this man, and find no reason to doubt that he is able and willing to fulfil his engagements. Yet, upon observing great crowds of men and women, who are allowed to enter with little or no advice respecting their way, you rather pertly begin to question the prince about them. He will not, however, condescend to answer these questions, but urges you to avail yourself of his advice, and to consider how unjust and unfeeling it is, when he takes such pains for *your* safety, to question his justice and benevolence in his conduct towards his apparently less favoured subjects. Suppose, lastly, that your pride and conceit get the better of your reason, and that you address the prince in such words as these: "Sir, though I have no reason to suspect your veracity, yet your conduct towards those people whom I see wandering without maps, about the forest, is not at all to my fancy. You must, therefore, either explain to me every plan and reason of your government, or I will throw this map in your face, and trust my own endeavours to find my way through the forest."—Would you deserve compas-

sion, if this your proud rashness carried you to inevitable perdition?

R. Certainly not: God forbid I should ever act in such an ungrateful manner.

A. Yet this is exactly what men do, who object to their reception of the Gospel, that God has not made it equally known to all the nations of the world. They, in fact, cast away the "pearl of great price," because they have been chosen amongst millions to possess it. They see the real and substantial value of the gift: they cannot but believe that he who puts it into their hands, must be infinitely kind and merciful; but still their pride will prevail, and they had rather be left to their own ignorance and weakness, than give glory to God for what they themselves receive, and trust that his goodness will, in some way, provide for his other creatures, and finally judge the world in righteousness.

R. I only put the question, because I have heard it from others. But, as to myself, I feel satisfied that every man's duty is to receive God's gifts with thankfulness, and without questioning the wisdom and justice of his government. I will, however, before we part, take the liberty to ask you why, when you became convinced of the truth of the Gospel, you did not return to your parents and friends in Spain? Surely there cannot be such difference between Romanism and Protestantism, as to force a man to become a stranger and an outcast to his own flesh and blood, and (as I believe you have done) turn his back upon all the hopes and prospects of life, and trust to chance for his subsistence. But perhaps, Sir, you have availed yourself of the liberty to marry, which Priests have in this country, and cannot leave your wife and children.

A. You are mistaken, my friend, in your conjecture. I lost my health soon after my arrival in this country, and have not had the means of supporting a wife, in such comfort as might make her amends

for devoting her life to the care of a sickly husband. But I do not like to speak upon these subjects, more than is absolutely necessary to remove all suspicion as to the motives of my change. My voluntary exile has been attended to me with every thing that can make me thankful, yet without any circumstance that could bribe my will against my sincerity. —As to the principal part of your question, I can assure you that the difference, which I find between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant religion, is so great and important, that had there been no Protestantism in the world, I cannot conceive how I should be a Christian at this moment.

R. Do you believe then, Sir, that the Roman Catholics are not Christians?

A. I have known most sincere followers of Christ amongst them; but am perfectly convinced that Catholicism, by *laying another foundation than that which is laid, that is, Jesus Christ* *; by making the Pope, with his Church, if not the *author*, certainly the *finisher* of their faith; exposes the members of that communion to the most imminent danger from the arguments of infidelity. What happened to me in my youth is the lot of a great part of the Clergy and the higher classes of Spain. The lower classes, and those who among the higher read little, and for that little confine themselves to the books approved by their Church, are fierce bigots, who would, if they had it in their power, spread desolation and havoc among the nations who do not bend the knee before the saints and relics of Rome. But, amongst such as read and think for themselves, I seldom found a sincere Christian. By the intolerance which Catholicism exercises, wherever it is the religion of the country, those men are forced to be hypocrites; but they are generally so uneasy and restless under the restraint imposed on them by the threats of the law,

* 1 Cor. iii. 11.

that a very slight acquaintance with another unbeliever will be sufficient to open their hearts to each other, and make them attack, in private, with great violence or levity, the most sacred mysteries of religion. There are few practical observations of my own, which I look upon with more confidence than the direct tendency of the Roman Catholic religion to produce infidelity. I suppose you either recollect, or have heard, the almost universal contempt in which the Christian religion was held in France during the Revolution. Now, had the French people been sincere Christians, as they appeared, just before their revolution broke out, they could not possibly have been changed in a few months into such horrible infidels, as that there should have been a doubt in their sort of parliament, whether they were or not to pass a law against the belief in a God. Here, therefore, you may observe the common effects of Catholicism, where it has the upper hand. It first disfigures and distorts the Gospel, so as to make it appear absurd and ridiculous in the eyes of men that are bold enough to use their judgments. Then it stops their mouths, and makes their thoughts rankle in their hearts, till when, at last, some great commotion releases them from the fear of religious tyranny, they abhor the very name of religion, under which they have been forced to bow to the most barefaced impostures and vexations; and shake off, in desperate impiety, their allegiance to God; taking it to be one and the same thing with the yoke so long and heavily laid on their necks by the Pope and his emissaries.

R. You think, then, Sir, that a Protestant is safer from the attacks of infidelity than a Roman Catholic?

A. Incomparably safer. I do not, in matters of religion, much like illustrations or comparisons taken from subjects which may lead the mind to levity. But I cannot help comparing the question between

a Romanist and an Infidel to one of the bets which you call *neck or nothing*. As a Roman Catholic is bound to believe that the Scriptures would be useless without the infallibility of the Pope and his Church, he must be ready to cast off the whole Bible, as soon as he shall be obliged to confess that there is the least error in their creed. The Romanist grounds his belief of the Bible on his belief in the Church of Rome; the Protestant, on the contrary, grounds his respect for the Church to which he belongs, on his belief of the Bible. The whole building of religion has been placed upside down by the Romanist, and the original foundations been made to stand upon the spires and pinnacles of the superstructure. Knock one of these down, and the whole tumbles to the ground. It is not so with the Protestant. He also has a Church; but it is a Church that leaves him free to try her authority by her conformity with the Scriptures. She does not, like Rome, teach her children that nothing can be true Christianity but what is professed under her control, and that Christ will not acknowledge as his disciples such as learn his doctrines through any other channel. A true Protestant Church, rather than endanger the saving faith of her members, by rivetting upon their minds the notion of no alternative between the absolute rejection of Christ, and perfect submission to her own declarations; will sacrifice every view of advantage to herself, and even afford matter of exultation to her implacable enemies, the Romanists, by leaving her members in perfect freedom to desert her, and choose their own Christian guides. But God has rewarded this generous forbearance, by appropriating it to Protestant Churches, and especially to our own, and making them wear it, as the badge by which men can know the true flock of Christ. “By this,” says our Saviour, “shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one towards another.”—“Thanks be to God! (ex-

claims a pious and amiable Bishop* of our Church, in one of the most eloquent passages to be read in any language,) thanks be to God, this mark of our Saviour is in us, which you (the Roman Catholics,) with our schismatics and other enemies want. As Solomon found the true mother by her natural affection, that chose rather to yield to her adversary's plea, claiming her child †, than endure that it should be cut in pieces; so may it soon be found, at this day, whether is the true mother: our's, that saith, give her the living child, and kill him not; or your's, that if she may not have it, is content it may be killed, rather than want of her will. 'Alas! (saith our's, even of those that leave her) these be my children! I have borne them to Christ in baptism: I have nourished them as I could with my own breasts, his Testaments. I would have brought them up to man's estate, as their free birth and parentage deserves. Whether it be their lightness, or discontent, or her enticing words, and gay shows ‡, they leave

* Bishop Bedell. He was promoted in 1624 to the see of Kilmore, in Ireland. The spirit of retaliation, which the previous persecutions of Rome still kept alive, found the greatest opponent in Bishop Bedell. His meekness and universal charity had so gained him the hearts of the Irish Roman Catholics, that, in the rebellion of 1641, the Bishop's palace was the only dwelling in the county of Cavan, which the fury of the rebels respected. As that palace was, however, the shelter of several Protestants whom the Papists had doomed to die, the Bishop, who firmly resisted the demands for their surrender, was seized and carried away with his whole family. The horrors which surrounded him broke his heart, and he soon died. The very rebels, in a large body, accompanied his remains to the grave, over which they fired, in honour to his memory.—The passage above quoted is from a letter to a person who had turned Papist. I have copied it from *THE FRIEND*, a work of Mr. S. T. Coleridge, which is much less known than its eloquence, piety, and learning deserve.

† Read the third chapter of the first Book of Kings.

‡ The arts employed by the Church of Rome to gain proselytes, and her gaudy and showy Church service.

me; they have found a better mother. Let them live yet, though in bondage. I shall have patience; I permit the care of them to their Father. I beseech him to keep them, that they do no evil. If they make their peace with him I am satisfied: they have not hurt me at all.' Nay, but saith your's, (*the Church of Rome*,) 'I sit alone as Queen and Mistress of Christ's family; he that hath not me for his mother cannot have God for his Father.' Mine therefore are these, either born or adopted: and, if they will not be mine, they shall be none.' So, without expecting Christ's sentence, she cuts with the temporal sword, hangs, burns, draws those that she perceives inclined to leave her, or have left her already. So she kills with the spiritual sword those that submit not to her, yea, thousands of souls, that not only have no means so to do, but many which never so much as have heard whether there be a Pope of Rome or no. Let our Solomon be judge between them,—yea, judge you—more seriously and maturely, not by guesses, but by the very mark of Christ, which, wanting yourselves, you have un-awares discovered in us: judge, I say, without passion and partiality, according to Christ's word, which is his flock, which is his Church."—Oh, my friend, if the deluded Protestants, who allow themselves to be entrapped by the cunning arts of Popery, knew, as I do, by a long and sad experience, the proud, fierce, and tyrannous spirit of the Church to which they submit, by their recognition of the Pope and his laws; they would weep with more bitter tears than Esau, the loss of that Christian liberty, which is the birth-right of every one who is born a Protestant. A true Roman Catholic is the slave of the slaves of the Pope, the priesthood, all over the world. If you hear them talk loud and boldly in these kingdoms; if they appear to you as free and independent as other men, they owe it to the Protestant laws, which protect them

against the Church tyranny to which their religion binds them. They owe it also to the cunning system pursued by the Pope himself, who, by allowing to them, in silence, this apparent freedom, acts like the huntsmen in India, who let their tame elephants roam at large in the forests, that they may entice the yet untamed and free into the pitfalls. No; trust them not! Had I a voice that could be heard from north to south, and from east to west, in these islands, I would use it to warn every Protestant against the wiles of Rome; wiles and arts, indeed, of so subtle and disguised a nature, that, I feel assured, many of the free-born Britons, who are made the instruments and promoters of them, do not so much as dream of the snare into which they are trying to decoy their countrymen. Such as believe that Popery, if allowed to interfere with the laws of England, would not most steadily aim at the ruin of Protestantism, even at the plain risk of spreading the most rank infidelity, should be sent to learn the character of that religion where it prevails uncontrolled; where I have learnt it during five and twenty years, in sincere submission, and for ten in secret rebellion. Would you form a correct idea of the character and spirit of that Church which the Roman Catholics bind themselves to obey, as they hope for salvation; of that Church, to be free from whose grasp, I deem my losses clear gain, and my exile a glorious new birth to the full privileges of a man and a Christian—grant me another patient hearing, at your own convenience, and you shall see the Pope's Church, such as she is, and without the disguises in which she begs for power.

R. I will hear you again, whenever you are disposed to speak on so important a subject.

DIALOGUE II.

Origin and true Principles of Protestantism; Calumnies of the Romanists against Luther; Origin and Progress of the Spiritual Tyranny of the Pope; Existence of true Protestants long before Luther; Persecution of the Vaudois and Albigenses; Right Notion about the Church of which we speak in the Creed.

Reader. I CANNOT tell you, Sir, how anxious I have been for your return.

Author. It cannot be more, my good friend, than I myself have been to come to you. But as I know that I must be either a welcome or an unpleasant visitor, according as people dwell upon or reject the words of my first conversation; I feel some misgivings within me when I approach them the second time. Now, I can tell you with a certainty, which I do not derive from any confidence in myself, but from my experience of the nature of truth, that since you have given some thought to the subject of our first conversation, you will, with God's blessing, bear with me to the end of our conferences.

R. That I will, Sir, for I love the truth in all matters; and much more so, of course, in those which concern my salvation. Now, I must tell you, my head has been at work upon things that I had never thought of before. When I formerly met my Roman Catholic neighbours, or saw their Chapel, these things appeared to me as natural as the large yew-tree in our church-yard, or the holly-hedge before the Rector's house. There they are; and I never troubled myself to know how they came there. But I now say to myself, I am a Protestant; and farmer such a one is a Roman Catholic. The reason of this I know to be, that my father, and my father's father, and so on, were Protestants, and his

were Catholics. But was this always so? How did this great division begin among Christians? I have, of course, heard of the *Reformation*, and of Luther, who, according to a little penny book, which is frequently hawked among the country-folks, seems not to have been a good man; for, it is said, he himself declares that the Devil taught him what he was to write against the Roman Catholics. I can hardly believe this to be true: I wish, Sir, you would set me right about the Protestant Religion, and who it is that we Protestants follow: Is it Luther?

A. The Roman Catholics would fain persuade the world that Luther is the author of our religion; but it is to be hoped that their partiality deceives them, and that they do not use a deliberate untruth out of pure spite. Such as are really learned among them, cannot but know that Protestants acknowledge no master, on religious points, but Christ, whose instructions they seek in the inspired writings of his Apostles and Evangelists, contained in the New Testament. It is, however, a great shame that some learned men among the Roman Catholics should employ themselves in writing and sending about such trash as *The confessed Intimacy of Luther with Satan*, when they must know, in the first place, that the story is a downright misrepresentation; and that, if Luther had really been the worst of men (which is the very reverse of the truth), it would be the same, with regard to us Protestants, as if a thief had, by some strange chance, put an honest individual in the way of recovering a great fortune, which a cunning set of men had converted to their own profit. I wish you, my friend, to remember the comparison I have just given you, whenever the Roman Catholics, or those writers of no religion, whom they employ to seduce the unlearned, come to you with stories about the wickedness of the Reformers, and the vices of Henry the Eighth. Surely, it is nothing to us by what instruments and what

means God was pleased to deliver us from the impostures and tyranny of the Church of Rome,—of that Church, which, having seized our rightful inheritance, the Bible, doled it out in bits and scraps to the people, mixed up and adulterated with human inventions. It is for them to be ashamed of the men they reckon among their Popes; poisoners, adulterers, and much worse still; a fact which they will not venture to deny. It is for them, I say, to be ashamed, that they believe and declare that such men held the place and authority of Christ upon earth; and that all Roman Catholics are bound still to believe their declarations, as if they had been given by Christ himself and his Apostles. We Protestants do not receive revealed truth through such channels. We feel grateful, indeed, to the Protestant Reformers, all of whom at the risk, and many at the expense, of their lives, roused the attention of the Christian world to the monstrous abuses which the Popes had introduced into the Church. Our Reformers encouraged the world to shake off the yoke of iron, which, in the name of Christ, the Popes had laid upon it; but did not claim any authority over the Protestant Churches, similar to that which Rome had usurped. The great and essential difference between the Romanists and ourselves is this: the Romish Church says to all Christians, “Follow not the Scriptures, but me;”—the Protestant Church, on the contrary, says, “Follow me as long as I follow the Scriptures.” Now, if Satan himself, had directed us to the pure fountain of Revelation, to the genuine word of God, would it not be our duty still to follow the Scriptures in preference to all human authority?

R. But is there any foundation for the story which the Roman Catholics are so busy to spread among the poor people, that Luther used to converse with the Devil?

A. No other foundation, my friend, than the spite

which has rankled in the hearts of the Roman Catholic Clergy, since Martin Luther opened the eyes of men to their spiritual tyranny. Luther was called by the Romanists, an instrument of the Devil, and all his words were said to be put into his mouth by the Prince of Darkness. In this manner they tried to frighten the simple and ignorant, that they might stop their ears to the powerful arguments of the great Reformer. Well, then, said Luther, addressing himself to his calumniators, the Doctors of the Roman Catholic Church, see if you can answer the reasons by which the Devil proved to me that the Mass is an idolatrous and unscriptural manner of worship; and he overwhelms the said Doctors with unanswerable reasons drawn from the Holy Scriptures. What better method could he employ to refute their abominable and silly calumny, than by showing that what the Romanists attributed to the Devil, was the true and genuine declaration of the Word of God? I have carefully examined the works of Luther, and can assure you, that what the Roman Catholics circulate in their penny tracts, is a most ungrounded calumny. Were we mean enough to retaliate, we might give a history of their Popes,—a history which they cannot gainsay, which would prove many of them to have been not in communication with Satan, but possessed by him, body and soul. I will, however, mention to you one of them, a Spaniard by birth, whom the Roman Catholics acknowledge as the head of their Church, and whom they declare to have been the representative of Christ upon earth. The Pope I speak of, whose name is Alexander the VIth, had four sons by a concubine, with whom he lived many years. The crimes he committed in order to enrich his children, exceed those of the most wicked heathen Emperors. After a life of the most diabolical profligacy, he died of poison, which he took by mistake, having prepared it for some person who stood

in the way of his son. This happened only twelve years before Luther's appeal to the Scriptures against a Church which recognized the supreme authority of men like Pope Alexander, and blasphemously called them the Vicars of Christ upon earth. From this fact alone, you may judge on which side the Devil was most likely to be.

R. Good heaven, Sir! have the Roman Catholics had such monsters for their Popes?

A. They have, indeed, and not a few.

R. And do they bind themselves to obey any one who may happen to be Pope, whether he be good or wicked?

A. They certainly do, in all spiritual matters. I will explain to you the whole Church-system of the Romanists in a few words. The Pope is their spiritual King; and what they call their Church, that is, their Bishops all over the world, is, one may say, their Spiritual Parliament. Now, as this Parliament of Bishops from all parts of the world cannot meet without great difficulty, and as no one but the Pope can call it together, it is the Pope alone, who, in reality, holds supreme authority over his spiritual subjects, the Roman Catholics. The way in which the Pope governs his Churches all over the world is this: He publishes a kind of Proclamation, which they call a Bull, and sends it round to all places where there are Roman Catholics. As every Bishop by himself, is a subject of the Pope, who calls himself the *Bishop of Bishops*, the Bull must be obeyed by them. Every Bishop commands all his Priests to see that the orders of the Pope be obeyed by all those who are under their charge. The priests preach the necessity of complying with the orders of the Pope; and when people come to get absolution of their sins, by privately confessing them, they are told that they cannot be forgiven, unless they obey the Bull from Rome. So, you see, that if all the world were true Roman Catholics, the Pope would

do what he pleased every where. Such in fact, was the case for many centuries before the Reformation. The Popes, in those times, boldly declared that they had authority from God to depose kings from their thrones, and many a fierce war has been made in consequence of the ambition of the Popes, who wished all Christian kings to recognize their authority. King John of England was obliged by the Pope to lay his crown at the feet of a Priest who was sent to represent him. That king was moreover made to sign a public deed by which he surrendered the kingdoms of England and Ireland to the Pope, reserving to himself the government of these realms under the control of the Bishops of Rome; and finally, as a mark of subjection, bound himself to pay an annual tribute. The Priest, who represented the Pope, took away the crown and kept it five days from the King, to show that it was in the Pope's power to give it back or not, as he pleased.

R. But did not you say, Sir, that the Pope only claims authority in spiritual matters, that is, in things that concern the soul?

A. Yes; but as the soul is in the body, the Pope has always begun his spiritual government by things which are corporal and temporal. The Pope used to argue in this manner: "I am the Vicar and Representative of Christ upon earth, and the souls of all men are in my charge. There is a King in such a kingdom, (say England) who will not believe the doctrines which I teach. He naturally will spread his own religious views in that country; and consequently it is my *spiritual* duty to take the crown off his head. His subjects (supposing them true and staunch Roman Catholics) are obliged, as they wish to save their souls, to obey my spiritual commands. I will, therefore, send a Bull, or Proclamation, desiring them not to acknowledge for their King, a man, who, how well soever he may govern his tem-

poral interests, is sure to ruin their spiritual concerns, and lead them all to eternal perdition."

R. But is it a doctrine of the Pope, that all men who are not of his opinion must be lost to eternity?

A. It is, indeed. It is an express article of their Creed, which it is not in their power to deny without being accursed by their own Church, and ceasing to be Roman Catholics.

R. I cannot comprehend how the Christians all over the world came to believe that men could not be saved unless they pinned their faith on the Pope and his Church. I believe, Sir, no one doubted that point before the Reformation.

A. So the Roman Catholics give it out; but the true fact is not so. You must know that there exists a very ancient and numerous Church which is called the *Greek*, which has never acknowledged the Pope. There are also the Churches of the Armenians and Ethiopians, which were established by the Apostles, or their early successors, and have no idea of the necessity of submission to the Pope, in order to be true Christians. Christianity, indeed, had been long established before the Popes be-thought themselves of claiming spiritual dominion over all Christendom. But I will tell you how they accomplished their usurpation, and you will see that the progress of their tyranny was perfectly natural. If you read the Acts of the Apostles, where we have the inspired history of the first Christian Churches, you will find no mention of any authority like that which Rome claims for herself and her head, the Pope. Rome, however, was at that time the mistress of the world, which was governed without control by the Roman Emperors. At first, those Roman Emperors made the fiercest opposition to Christianity; and the Christian Bishops of Rome, being persecuted and in danger of their lives, had neither spirit nor leisure to imagine themselves superior to all other Bishops. But the persecutions

ceased; and the Emperors themselves becoming Christians, the Bishops of Rome began to think themselves entitled to be that in the Church of Christ, all over the world, which the Emperors were in the whole Roman state. It was then that the idle and ungrounded report that St. Peter had been Bishop of Rome, grew up into a common belief: then it was said, that the Popes were St. Peter's successors: that as St. Peter was the Head of the Apostles, so the Pope was the Head of all Bishops: and that as Christ had said to St. Peter, that he was a rock, on which he would build his Church, every Pope, good, bad, or indifferent, must also be a rock, on which the whole of Christianity depends. The temporal power of Rome gave a certain colour to these absurd fancies; for Rome was at that time, to the greatest and best part of the world, what London is now to England and all her possessions. People, you know, attach ideas of superiority to every thing that comes from the capital town of a great empire. It happened, however, that not long after the Popes had begun to hold up their heads in this way, the whole Roman empire was invaded by immense armies of barbarous people, who broke in from the North, where they had till then lived in the forests, unconquered and untamed by any human power. In the course of a few centuries, these barbarians became masters of the Roman empire. They were all ignorant idolaters; but by mixing with Christians they were converted to Christianity. The Christian Religion, indeed, though ever so disfigured with the errors of those who profess it, is so holy, and has such power over the soul, that the barbarian conquerors of Europe could not but respect it. The Priests, who worked in their conversion, were in the Pope's interest, and took care to instruct those ignorant men in all the false pretences on which the Bishops of Rome had built their assumed superiority. Every thing that the Roman

Priests said was received as Gospel: for our forefathers (you should know that we are all chiefly descended from those northern warriors) could neither write nor read, and were more illiterate than the merest clown in our own times. Thus things proceeded for ages; whilst error grew more and more rooted as it descended from father to son. There were now and then a few men, who, notwithstanding the general ignorance, applied themselves to the study of the Scriptures, and some were bold enough to declare that the Popes were usurpers over Christian liberty. But the pretended successors of St. Peter were not so mild as that holy Apostle, who submitted to rebukes*; but had grown into proud tyrants, who commanded all Christian princes to put to death every one that dared to contradict Papal authority. Many massacres were committed by order of the Popes, and even good men were ready to dip their hands in the blood of those whom Rome had declared heretics. The spiritual usurpers had a great advantage in those times, when the art of printing was unknown. Perhaps you are not aware, my friend, that for ages of ages, the only way that people had to publish books was to get them copied out by hand; so that one hundred Bibles could not be procured' under the expense of seven thousand days, or nearly twenty years' labour, which it was necessary to pay to the men who lived by writing out books. Consider then, the ignorance of the Scriptures in which the mass of the people must have lived, when none but very wealthy men could afford to purchase a Bible. The Romanists boast to the ignorant and unlettered, that the Religion of Rome had been acknowledged as the only true one over all the world; and that it was uncontradicted till the time of Luther. In this they tell you what is not a fact; but observe

* See St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, c. ii.

besides, that the silence of the Christian people, till that period, is a poor sort of approbation, for it is the approbation of gross ignorance. In proportion as knowledge increased, so complaints and protestations against Rome became more frequent. But in every case they were answered by fire and sword. The Popish Clergy used, besides, another shameful trick. Whenever there arose a set of men who opposed their usurpations, they published the most infamous calumnies against their opponents, and charged them with the grossest crimes of the most filthy and disgusting lust. This they did in the same manner, and on the same ground, that the old Pagans had done against the Primitive Christians. For as both the early Christians, and the opposers of the tyranny of Rome, were obliged to avoid death by holding their religious assemblies in secret, their enemies made the world believe that they did shut themselves up for vicious and infamous purposes. This trick was the more hateful, as the Clergy of the Church of Rome, at that very time, were the most dissolute and profligate set that ever lived; and this I can prove by the confession of their own writers. But Providence could not allow this state of things to continue much longer; and, as learning increased, so the opposition to Rome grew stronger. From the beginning of the twelfth century, the numbers which in various and distant parts of Christendom, stood up against the errors and tyranny of the Popes, were every day upon the increase, and that in spite of the most fierce persecution on the part of the Romanists. The very means which were employed against them, however, contributed, under God's providence, to prepare the great defeat of the Papal See, which took place four hundred years afterwards by the preaching of Luther. As those who opposed the corruptions of Popery, were put to death, or spoiled of their property, and turned adrift upon the world, many of them took refuge in

distant countries, such as Bulgaria, Hungary, and Bohemia, from whence their descendants, who had learnt to hate the oppression of the Popes, returned in after times, and swelled the number of their opponents. There were also some clans or families of simple shepherds, who, like the Highlanders of Scotland, had lived all along confined to the valleys of the mountains which separate France from Italy. They were so poor and unknown, that the Popes had either been ignorant of their existence, or thought it not worth the trouble to teach them their adulterated Christianity; so that these happy rustics preserved, by means of their poverty and simplicity, the doctrines of Christ such as they had received them from the early Christian Missionaries, who spread the Gospel before the Popes had disfigured it with their inventions. Their descendants live to this very day in the same spot, and are Protestants, notwithstanding the murders and burnings by which their sovereigns, the Kings of Sardinia, strove, till very lately, to make them Romanists. An English Clergyman, whom I have the pleasure of knowing, visited those good people not long ago, and found them most excellent Protestants. They have their Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, and agree with us of the Church of England, in every essential point of religious belief and practice. These simple and truly primitive Christians are known by the name of *Vaudois*.—Well, to return to my narrative: the persecuted opponents of the Pope who returned from the land of their exile, having joined with those who remained concealed in Europe, reappeared in growing numbers, and were called Albigenes. Pope Innocent III. in the year 1198, despatched several Priests with orders to destroy them, wherever they might be found. One of those who made most havoc among them is known and worshipped by the Roman Catholics, by the name of St. Dominic. He was the founder of the

Inquisition, a court of judges whose only employment is to discover and punish those who reject the authority of the Church of Rome. A large province of France had become, almost to a man, staunch opposers of Popery. But the Pope promised remission of all their sins to the King of France and his Lords, if they would join to destroy his enemies. The horrors which the friends of the Pope committed in that war, exceed all imagination. You may judge by what happened on the taking of a town called *Beziers*. The Albigenses had shut up themselves in it, though there were also many Roman Catholics within its walls. The Pope's troops were on the point of storming it, when the doubt occurred to the soldiers, how they were to distinguish the Papists from the Albigenses, in order to spare the first, without letting the Pope's enemies escape. A Priest, whom they consulted, answered them in these words: *Kill them all! God will know his own.* Upon hearing this the soldiers entered the city, and put to the sword fifteen thousand persons. The same persecution, though not so fierce, was extended to Spain, and even to England, where thirty Albigenses were starved to death at Oxford.

R. I beg your pardon, Sir, for interrupting you: but I am longing to know whether you believe that those unfortunate creatures were real Protestants like ourselves.

A. They were certainly Protestants as far as opposition to the Pope's tyranny and usurpation over the Church of Christ is concerned, though I cannot answer for every point of doctrine which they held. But consider, my friend, the circumstances of those unhappy Christians. Their fathers had grown up under the dominion of the Popes, in an age of universal ignorance. The Bible had been carefully kept from them, and it was with great difficulty and danger that they could meet to read some portions of it which had been translated into their language.

How then, could these poor people find out at once the truth, and avoid all sorts of errors, without competent and well-educated teachers, and left, as they were, to grope for the true Gospel, not only in the dark, but under all the irritation and fear of a violent persecution? You see that it was impossible. This was only the breaking out, through the thick clouds of Popery, of a beam of light which gradually increased till the appointed time when Luther and the great Reformers of England were enabled to make a perfect separation of the truths contained in the Bible, from the errors in which the Church of Rome had involved them. My object in mentioning these facts is to show you, that in proportion as learning and an acquaintance with the Bible increased, the opposition to the Pope's encroachments grew; and that the Papal Church was not without public opponents but when ignorance had overrun the world, and the Bible was unknown. The present Pope is so well aware of this, that he has published a Bull against the English and Foreign Bible Society, because wherever the Bible makes its appearance without his own notes and interpretations, it never fails to raise him enemies. Can that be the *only true Church of God*, whose greatest enemy is the pure word of God himself?

R. Surely not, Sir. But was there no true Church of God from the time that Popery began, till the *Reformation*? I recollect to have seen a Roman Catholic tract, where it was very strongly urged, that since Christ has promised that the gates of hell should not prevail against his Church, the Roman Catholic Church must all along have been in the right.

A. That is a very common argument of the Romanists: but it has no foundation except their own fancies about the infallibility of the Church. Our Saviour did not promise that any particular Church should never err; but that the light of his Gospel should never be completely put out by the contriv-

ances and attacks of hell. Such is the meaning, you well know, of the words *to prevail*, or gain a victory. The light of Revelation was very much dimmed and obscured, before Luther and the Reformers who established our Church. Others had, long before them, complained of the obscurity, and tried, as well as they could, to rekindle it; but the means of Providence were not yet ready. Learning was very scarce till the invention of printing multiplied all sorts of books, and put the Bible into the hands of many. The printing-press had been spreading knowledge far and wide, for about seventy years, when Luther raised his voice, and the light of the Gospel shone again in its full splendour. The candle was the same that Christ had set on the candlestick: the Pope had hid it under a bushel; but Luther, despising the threats of the spiritual tyrant, took it out of his keeping, and made it shine again as free as when the Apostles held it up to the eyes of the world. Whoever attentively considers the state of the Gospel before the Reformation, must be convinced that Luther was the instrument by which Christ prevented the victory of Satan over his Church.

R. I am always at a loss when I would clearly understand what is meant by the Church. Where is that Church against which Christ tells us that Satan shall not prevail?

A. Let me answer you by a question, though I fear it will appear to you rather out of the way. Where is the plough that we pray God to speed?

R. Oh, Sir! we do not mean any particular plough. We only pray God to prosper and bless the labours of man to produce the staff of life.

A. Very well. Now, suppose that God had in the Scriptures promised that evil should never prevail against the *plough*. What would you understand by such words?

R. I believe they would mean that there should

never be a famine over all the world, or that all the crops should never fail at once, so that it would be impossible to grow any more grain.

A. And what would you think if a club of farmers, with a rich man at their head, had established themselves in London, and wished to have a monopoly of all the corn on earth, saying to the government, “you must go to war to defend our rights: for God has said, that evil shall not prevail against the *plough*;—and who can be *the plough*, but the head and company of farmers, of the county of Middlesex, wherein stands the great city of London, which is the first city of the world?”

R. I should certainly say that they were a set either of madmen or rogues, who wished to levy a tax upon all farmers, wherever they were.

A. I will now leave you to apply what we have said, to the use which the Pope and his Cardinals have made of Christ’s promise, that Satan should *not prevail against his Church*. Church, in this passage, must be understood in the sense in which we understand *Plough*, speaking of agriculture in general. It must mean *Christianity* in general; not Christianity confined to the walls of any town: the meaning, therefore, of Christ’s promise must be, that the Devil shall never succeed in abolishing the Faith in God through Christ, which has been published in the Gospel; not that the Pope must always be in the right,—and much less that he is to be the Spiritual Lord of all the Christians on earth.

R. I can understand very well, that the promise of Christ cannot be confined to the Church of Rome. But yet, Sir, is not the Church of Rome the *Catholic* Church; and do we not say in the Creed, that we believe in the Holy Catholic Church? One might suppose that, by these words, we bind ourselves to believe in the Church of Rome.

A. The Romanists, my friend, have on that point, as on many others, taken an unfair advantage,

which they employ to seduce the simple. *Catholic*, you must understand, is a word which means *universal*. Just at the times when the Apostles, and their immediate followers, had preached the Gospel to all the world, their doctrine was *Catholic*, that is, *universal*. Wherever there were Christians, their belief was the same; and as that belief exactly agreed with the doctrines of the Apostles, *Catholic*, or universal belief, was the same as *true* belief. Errors, however, began very soon to multiply in the Christian Churches, and these errors were called *heresies*, which means, *separations*; because those who set up their own conceits as the doctrine of the Gospel, *separated* themselves from the *universal* belief, which at that time was the *true* one. These heresies or *separations* became, in course of time, so numerous, that the true Christian belief could no longer be called *Catholic* or universal, with respect to the *number* of Christians who held it; so that to say I believe in the *Holy Catholic Church*, was not the same as if one said, I believe in the *true* Church. You will, therefore, observe a change on this point, in the Creed which is used in the Communion Service—a Creed which the Roman Catholics receive, and which is about fifteen hundred years old. In that Creed it was found necessary to add the word *Apostolic* to the word *Catholic*; and consequently we find there, “*I believe in one Catholic and Apostolic Church*;” which is as much as to say, I believe that there is spread over the world a *true* Church of Christ, which was known in the beginning of Christianity by its being *Catholic or Universal*; but which, since error became more general than the true faith, must be known by its being *apostolic*. By this you will perceive the artful contrivance of the Romanists, who knowing that what in the times of the Apostles was *Catholic*, was therefore true Christianity, wish us to call them *Catholics* in the same meaning, even after the time when Rome had made

her errors so common in the world, that they appeared at one time to be *Catholic*, that is, *universal*. Protestants, therefore, should be aware of this trick, and never call them *Catholics*, but *Roman Catholics*, *Romanists*, or *Papists*; though as the last name seems to hurt their feelings, I seldom make use of it myself, and never with an intention to offend them. —Every one, my friend, all over the world, who holds the pure doctrine of the Apostles,—every *Apostolic* Christian is a true *Catholic*,—a member of that *one true* Church which the Apostles made *Catholic* or *universal*: but which continued being *universal* a very short time. The members of that *heretical*, that is *particular* Church of the Pope,—that Church of the individual city of Rome, cannot be *Catholic* or *universal*, except as far as they are *Apostolic*.

R. And how, Sir, are men to judge what Christian Churches are *Apostolic*?

A. By the words of the Apostles and their Divine Master, which we have in the New Testament.

R. But does not the Church of Rome receive the Scriptures?

A. She does; and as far as she regulates her doctrine and practice by that standard, we believe her to be a part of the true universal Church of Christ. But in regard of her inventions, whereby she has nearly made void the spirit and power of the Gospel, we are bound to declare her a corrupt and heretical Church; a Church which has degenerated from the *Apostolic* rule of faith, and, in proportion to the additions which out of her own fancy she has made to the Gospel, has separated herself from the *one Catholic*, or universal Church of Christ; which is that multitude of persons, of all times and countries, who, being called by the grace of God to believe in his Son Jesus Christ, have conformed, and do now conform, their faith and lives to the rule of the Scriptures, and ground their hopes of eternal salvation on the promises made therein.

R. I believe you said, Sir, that the Church of Rome has made additions to the Gospel out of her own fancy: has she also made any omissions in the articles of her faith?

A. No. It pleased Providence to preserve the whole of the Christian faith in her keeping, without diminution or curtailment. The true Gospel was thus kept entire during the ages of general ignorance, under the heap of her superstitions, like live seeds, which want nothing to spring up, but the removal of some layer of stones and rubbish. Had she been permitted to cast off some of the essential articles of the Apostolic doctrine, as other sects do, the work of the Reformation would have been difficult. But when Luther and the other Reformers had removed the superstitious additions of the Romanists, the whole truth, as it is in Christ, appeared in its original purity; and as both Rome and the Protestant Churches agree in every thing which is really a part of the Apostolic doctrine, we cannot be charged with innovation.

R. Yet they say that ours is a new religion.

A. Any Protestant may rebut that charge with the Bible in his hand. The New Testament is the original charter of Christians; any thing under the name of Christianity, which we do not find there, must be an abuse of more modern date than the charter. The additions made by the Church of Rome are, it is true, very old; but the foundations over which she has built her fantastic structure must be older still. That foundation, the *Testament*, is our religion; and we do not wish to prove our religion older than Christ.

R. I wish you would have the goodness to mention the additions and innovations which the Church of Rome has made to the true and scriptural religion of Christ.

A. I will, with great pleasure, in our next conversation.

DIALOGUE III.

Conduct of the Church of England and of the Roman Catholic Church compared : some Account of the Innovations made by Rome: Tradition: Transubstantiation: Confession: Relics and Images.

Author. I PROMISED, at our last meeting, to give you an account of the innovations which the Church of Rome has made, and the human additions by which she has adulterated the pure doctrines of the Gospel. But before I begin, I must ask your opinion upon a case which I heard some time ago.

Reader. I will give it you, Sir, to the best of my knowledge.

A. The people of two neighbouring islands, which acknowledged the authority of the same Sovereign, received each a governor from the metropolis. One of the governors presented himself with his commission in one hand, and with the book of the Colonial Laws in the other. "Gentlemen," he said, "here is the King's commission, which authorizes me to govern you according to these laws. I will direct my officers to get them printed, and every one of you shall have a copy in his possession. If ever any one of you should think that I am stepping beyond my powers, or governing against the laws, he may examine the point and consult his friends about it; and if, after all, he feels inclined not to be under me any longer, I will not at all molest him in his removal to the neighbouring island, carrying away every thing that belongs to him." The other governor pursued quite a different course. He appeared in the capital with all the pomp and

show of a King. He gave out, that he had authority from the Sovereign, not only to govern according to the standing laws, but to make new statutes at his will and pleasure. At the same time; he employed his officers to deprive the people of all the copies of the Colonial Laws that were to be found, and published heavy penalties against any one who should possess or read them without his leave, or in a copy which had not his own interpretation of the statutes. Some high-spirited individuals presented a petition to the new governor, stating, "that they were perfectly willing and ready to obey any one commissioned by their King; but, still they conceived themselves entitled to possess a copy of the laws of the country; that if the Monarch himself had empowered him to make additional laws, they would make no objection to that, provided he showed an authentic copy of his commission." The governor grew quite furious upon reading this remonstrance, and answered that he would not shew any document relating to his power of making new laws; that the King had conferred upon him this privilege, not in writing, but by a message; and, finally, that if the petitioners did not obey him in silence, he would employ force against them.—"Do Sir, but prove to us your commission from the King, and we are ready to obey without a murmur."—"Take those fellows," said the governor, "and let them die by fire." The order being executed, a number of citizens tried to escape from the island, but troops were stationed at every port and creek, and such as were found in the act of getting away were, without mercy, put to the sword or confined to dungeons, till they swore that they would receive whatever the governor commanded, as if it had been a part of the book of the laws. To complete the picture of this governor, I will tell you that there was not one among the laws which he added to the written statutes of the colonies, but

evidently procured both to him and to his officers an increase of wealth and power.—The question I wish you to answer is, under which of these two governors would you advise a man to place himself?

R. I answer without a doubt,—under the first.

A. What! without any farther inquiry; without examining the book of colonial laws; without hearing the reason of the other governor?

R. If I understood you rightly, the tyrant governor (for he deserves no better name) does not wish to settle the matter by reasoning: he wishes to be believed on his word, and puts to death even those who would avoid his power by flight. He must be an impostor,—an usurper, who grounds his authority on his own word, and his word on his tyranny.

A. Oh, my friend, how justly you have given your verdict! *The Pope* is the man. My parable applies literally to the case between the Roman Church and the Protestants. We, the Protestant Clergy, declare to the world, that our Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, have no authority but what the Scriptures confer upon us, for the instruction and edification of the people. We show them our commission in the book of God's word, and leave them to judge whether they are bound or not to listen to our instructions. If any one wishes to leave us, he is at liberty to do so: we use no arts, no compulsion to keep any one within the pale of our Church. To those who remain under our guidance we give no other rule or law but the Scripture; our articles declare that nothing contained in them is to be believed on any other consideration, but the clear warrant of the Holy Scriptures. But hear the conditions which the Pope presents to mankind: "Come to me," he says, "as you wish to be saved; for none can escape the punishment of hell who rejects my authority." I ask him for the proof that God has limited

Salvation, by making it pass exclusively through his hands. He answers me that he has received the power of interpreting the Scriptures, and adding to them several articles of faith : and that, by virtue of that power, I must believe what he affirms. I rejoin, that if the Scriptures said that the Bishop of Rome and his Church were to be the infalliable interpreters of the written word of God, and that they had power to add to the laws therein contained, I should be ready to obey ; but since the Scriptures are silent upon a point of such importance, I will not believe the Pope, who is the party that would gain by the forced interpretation of those passages on which he wishes to build his power over the whole Church. He now grows angry, and calls me a heretic, protesting that the Scripture is clear as to his being the head of the Church, and Vicar of Christ. Are the Scriptures so clear in favour of your authority, my Lord the Pope ? Why, then, are you and yours so alarmed when you see the Scriptures in the hands of the people ? If your commission from God is clear, why do you not allow every man, woman, and child to read it ? Because (says the Pope) they are ignorant.—Ignorant, indeed ! is the meanest child too ignorant to know the person whom his father appoints to teach him ? Is a stranger to drag a child away and keep him under his control without the father saying, “ this is to be your teacher ; I wish you to obey him like myself ? ” The only thing, in fact, which the child can perfectly understand, is the appointment of the person who is to be his tutor : and are we to be told that because the mass of Christians are children in knowledge, they must blindly believe the man who presents himself, rod in hand, saying to them, “ follow me, for I have a letter of your father’s, in which he desires you to be under my command ? ” — “ Shew me the letter,” says the Christian.—“ You are a silly babe,” says the Pope, “ and must let me explain

the letter to you.”—“ Yes,” says the Christian, “ but all I want is to see that my father mentions your name, and desires me to obey you.”—“ No :” is the Pope’s answer ; “ my name is not in the letter, but St. Peter’s name is there : Saint Peter was at Rome, and I am at Rome, and therefore it is clear that you must obey me.”—“ But tell me, I pray you, my Lord the Pope, does the letter say even that St. Peter was ever at Rome ?”—“ No ; but I tell you he was,” says the Holy Father.—“ Still another question, good my Lord : is it in the letter, that Peter was to govern all Christians more than any other of the Apostles as long as he lived ?”—“ The letter does not say it, but I do.”—“ So it seems that all your authority must depend, not upon any command of my heavenly Father, but upon your own word. If so, I will not follow you ; but put myself under instructors who will read my Father’s words to me, without requiring from me more than what I find therein enjoined.”—Happy, my friend, is that Christian who can speak thus out of the Pope’s grasp ; for he is a fierce schoolmaster, and would tear the skin off any one’s back who should not take his word in points relating to his authority. You know that I should be made to endure a lingering death, for what I say to you at this moment, if the Pope or his spiritual subjects could lay hold on me in any part of the world, but where Protestants are in a sufficient number to protect me.

R. I see, Sir, that the Pope is just like the proud usurping Governor you described. He grounds his claims on his own authority, and supports his authority by the sword. But what strikes me above all, is his fear of the Scriptures. If the Scriptures were favourable to him, he would not object to their free circulation. I believe you said that the Pope had introduced many things in the Church which are not to be found in the Scriptures.

A. Very many, indeed; and what is still more remarkable, not one of which, but is decidedly to his own profit. Here again the comparison between the Pope and the Protestant clergy is enough to decide any rational man in doubt what Church to follow. Any one who is capable of making the comparison, will clearly perceive, that on whatever points the Church of Rome, and the Protestant Churches (especially ours of England) agree, the Scriptures are their common foundation. But as soon as they begin to disagree, the Church of Rome is seen striving after wealth and power in the articles which she adds to the Scriptures; while the Protestant Clergy evidently relinquish both emolument and influence, by their refusal to follow the Romanists beyond the authority of the word of God. I will give you instances of this, as I proceed in the enumeration of the principal points of difference.

Tradition is one of the most essential subjects of dispute between Protestants and Romanists. The Romanists declare that the Scriptures alone, are not sufficient for Salvation; but that there is the word of God by *hearsay*, which is superior to the word of God in *writing*. By this *hearsay*, for tradition is nothing else, they assure the world that the Scripture must be explained; so that if the Scripture says *white*, and tradition says *black*, a Roman Catholic is bound to say, that *white* means *black* in God's written word.

R. But, Sir, how can they be sure of that hearsay or tradition? Every one knows how little we can depend on reports.

A. They pretend a kind of perpetual inspiration, a miraculous knowledge which can distinguish the true from the false traditions. The existence, however, of that miracle, people must take upon their assertion.

R. And who do they say has that miraculous knowledge?

A. Their divines are not well agreed about it. Some say the miracle is constantly worked in the Pope; others believe that it does not take place but when the Pope and his Bishops meet in council.

R. Then, after all, the Romanists cannot be certain at any time that the miracle has taken place. Would it not be better to abide by the Scriptures, and judge of those *hearsays* or traditions by what we certainly know to be God's word?

A. That is exactly what we Protestants do.

R. Yet one difficulty occurs to me. Is it not by a kind of *hearsay* or tradition that we know the New Testament to have been really written by the Apostles and Evangelists?

A. What then?

R. You see, Sir, that tradition seems to be a good ground of Faith.

A. Now, tell me: if you had the title-deeds of an estate, which had descended from father to son, till they came into your possession, what would you say to an attorney who should come to you with a *hearsay*, that the original founder of the estate had desired his descendants to submit their lands and chattels to the family of the said attorney, that they might keep it and manage it for ever, explaining every part of the title-deeds according to the traditional knowledge of their family?

R. I should be sure to show him the way out of my house, without hearing another word about his errand.

A. Yet he might say, your title-deeds are only known to be genuine by *tradition*.

R. Yes, Sir; but the title-deeds are something substantial, which may be known to be the same which my father received from my grandfather, and again my grandfather from his father, and so on;

but there is no putting seals or marks on flying words.

A. Well, you have answered most clearly one of the strongest arguments by which the Romanists endeavour to foist their traditions on the world. As long as the Christians who had received instructions from the mouth of the Apostles were alive, Saint Paul, for instance, might say to the Thessalonians, "*Hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle* *; because they could be sure that the words they had heard were Saint Paul's; but what mark would have been put on these unwritten words, to distinguish them as the true words of the Apostle, after they had passed through the hands of three or four generations?

R. What is, after all, the advantage which the Pope derives from these traditions?

A. They are to him of the most essential service. Without *tradition* his hands would be tied up by Scripture; but by placing the Scripture under the control of these *hearsays*, the Pope and his Church have been able to build up the monstrous system of their power and ascendancy. You know that one of the principal articles of the Roman Catholics is *transubstantiation*. This article would be searched for in vain in the Scriptures; for though our Saviour said of the bread, "this is my body," and of the wine, "this is my blood," the Apostles could not understand these words in a corporeal sense, as if Christ had said to them that he was holding himself in his own hands. Consequently, Saint Paul did not believe that the bread and wine were converted into the material Christ, by the words of consecration; but though he calls these signs the communion of the body and blood of Christ, he also

* 2 Thess. ii. 15.

calls them bread and cup*. The Romanists, however, found out that by making the people believe, that any Priest could make Christ come to his hands by repeating a few words, they should enjoy a veneration bordering upon worship, from the laity. But how could this be done without the help of tradition? The people were therefore told, that the Pope knew by *tradition*, that, after the words of consecration, every particle of bread and wine was converted into the body and soul of our Saviour: that if you divide a consecrated wafer† into atoms, every one of those atoms contains a whole God and man; and that the presence is so material, that (I really shudder when I repeat their most irreverent language) if, as it has happened sometimes, a mouse eats up part of the consecrated bread, it certainly eats the body of Christ; and that, if a person should be seized with sickness, so as to throw up the contents of his stomach immediately after receiving the sacrament, the filth should be gathered up carefully and kept upon the altar:—this I have seen done. I could relate many more absurdities, which would shock any but a Roman Catholic, to whom habit has made them familiar. I must not, however, give up this subject without pointing to the advantages which the doctrine of Transubstantiation brings to the Roman Catholic Clergy, that you may see the use they make of tradition.

I have already told to you the superstitious veneration which the Roman Catholics pay to their Priests. A Priest, even when raised to that office from the lowest of the people, is entitled to have his

* 1 Cor. x. 16.

† The Roman Catholics use not common bread for the Sacrament, but a white wafer with the figure of a cross made upon it, by the mould in which the wafer is baked. By this means they remove the appearance of bread, which would be too striking and visible an argument against their doctrine.

hands kissed with the greatest reverence by every one, even a Prince of his communion. Children are taught devoutly to press their innocent lips upon those hands, to which, as they are told, the very Saviour of mankind, who is in heaven, comes down daily. The laws of Roman Catholic countries are, with regard to Priests, made according to the spirit of these religious notions:—a Priest cannot be tried by the Judges of the land for even the most horrible crimes. Murders of the most shocking nature have often been perpetrated by Priests in my country: but I do not recollect an instance of their being put to death, except when the murdered person was also a Priest. I knew the sister of a young lady who was stabbed to the heart at the door of the church, where the murderer, who was her confessor, had, a few minutes before, given her absolution! He stabbed her in the presence of her mother, to prevent the young lady's marriage, which was to take place that day. This monster was allowed to live, because he was a Priest.—What but the belief in transubstantiation could secure to the Clergy impunity of this kind? Even in Ireland, where the law makes no difference between man and man, a Priest can take liberties with the multitude and exert a despotic command over them, which the natural spirit of the Irish would not submit to from the first nobleman in the kingdom.—For all this the Catholic Clergy have to thank *tradition*, for without that pretended source of Revelation, it would have been impossible to make whole nations believe that a Priest (as they declare) can turn a wafer into God.

R. Was it not in the power of the Reformers to have preserved the same veneration to themselves, by encouraging the belief in transubstantiation?

A. It was so much in their power, that even after England had shaken off the authority of the Pope, many were burnt alive for denying the corporeal presence of Christ in the Sacrament. The mass of the

people were so blind and obstinate upon that point, that not one of the Protestant Martyrs of the reign of Queen Mary, but could have saved his life by declaring in favour of transubstantiation. Nothing, indeed, but an almost supernatural courage, and an apostolic love of revealed truth, could have enabled the Protestant Clergy to oppose and subdue the Romanist doctrine of the Sacrament.

R. I believe, Sir, that the doctrine you speak of, was valuable to the Clergy in other respects?

A. It was, and is still to the Romanist Priesthood a never-failing source of profit. The notion that they have the power of offering up the whole living person of Christ, whenever they perform mass, paved the way to the doctrine which makes the mass itself a repetition of the great sacrifice of Christ upon the cross. Under the idea that the Priest who performs the bloodless sacrifice, as they call it, can appropriate the whole benefit of it to the individual whom he mentions in his secret prayer before or after consecration, the Roman Catholics are eager all over the world to purchase the benefit of masses for themselves; to obtain the favour of Saints by having the masses done in their praise; and finally to save the souls of their friends out of Purgatory by the same means.

R. I have heard a great deal about Purgatory; but I do not exactly understand what the doctrine is which the Romanists hold about it.

A. They believe that there is a place very like hell, where such souls as die, having received absolution of their sins, are made to undergo a certain degree of punishment; like criminals who, being saved from the gallows, are kept to hard work as a means of correction. There is a strong mixture of a very ancient heresy in the religious system of the Catholics, which leads them to attribute to pain and suffering the power of pleasing God. It was that notion that first produced the idea of purgatory;

and it is the same notion that induces the devout and sincere among them, almost to kill themselves with stripes and flogging, with fasts, and many other self-inflicted penances.

R. I have heard that the heathen in India do the same.

A. The religious practices of those heathen, and many among the Roman Catholics, are remarkably similar. But we must not lose sight of the offspring of Roman Catholic *tradition*, and the profitable account to which the Church of Rome has turned it. *Tradition* alone must have been brought to the aid of Purgatory. But the doctrine once being received by the people became a true gold mine to the Pope and his priesthood. This was obtained by teaching the Roman Catholics, that the Pope, as Vicar of Christ, had the power to relieve or release the souls in Purgatory, by means of what they call indulgences. These indulgences were made such an open market of, throughout Europe before the Reformation, that Kings and Governments, even such as were staunch Catholics, bitterly complained that the Popes drained their kingdoms of money. Incalculable treasures have flowed into the lap of the Roman Catholic Clergy, for which they have to thank the doctrine of Purgatory. The reason is clear: the Pope knew too well his interest, not to tack the doctrine of transubstantiation and the mass on that of the souls in Purgatory fire. If a mass, they said, is a repetition of the great sacrifice on the cross, and it is in the power of the Priest to apply the benefit of it to any one, then, by sending such a relief to a soul in Purgatory, that soul has the greatest chance of being set free from those burning flames, and of entering at once into heaven. Who that believes this doctrine will spare his pocket when he thinks that his dearest relations are asking the aid of a mass to escape out of the burning furnace! You will find, accordingly, that no Roman Catholic who

can afford it, omits to pay as many Priests as possible to say masses for his deceased relations and friends; and that the poor of that persuasion, both in England and Ireland, establish clubs for the purpose of collecting a fund, out of which a certain number of masses are to be purchased for each member that dies. Their accounts are regularly kept, and if any member dies without having paid his subscription, he is allowed to be tormented to the full amount of his debt in the other world, where the difference between rich and poor, according to these doctrines, is greater than in this life. A rich man may sin away, and settle his debt with masses; the poor must be a beggar even at the very gates of heaven, and trust to his savings properly kept and improved by a club, or to the charity of the rich, to escape out of that purgatory which you may properly call the *Debtor's side* of hell.

R. Perhaps the Romanists will say that God will not allow the rich people to get off by the great number of masses, but will give the benefit of them to the poor.

A. So they say, when the absurdity of their doctrine stares them in the face. But even this contrivance to evade the difficulty objected to their doctrine, has been turned into an increase of profit to the Clergy. "Since," it is said, "no man can be certain that one or more masses, indulgences, or any of the various Purgatory-bank-bills, will be allowed to avail the person for whom they are purchased, it behoves those who have worldly means to repeat the remittance as often as possible, that your friend or yourself may at last have his turn." You see, therefore, that even the doubts which might have endangered the sale of the Popish wares, are made, by an effort of ingenuity, to increase demand in the market. Without the fresh discovery, that God appropriates to the more deserving poor the masses and indulgences sent to the wealthy dead, a mass or

plenary indulgence a head, would be more than sufficient to keep purgatory empty. The case is very different when you are acquainted with the doubt in which you must be left as to the effect of your purchases ; so that, if possible, you must continue them for ever.

R. What do you mean by indulgences ?

A. That wonderful storehouse of knowledge, *Tradition*, has informed the Popes that there is somewhere an infinite treasure of spiritual merits, of which they have the key ; so that they may give to any one a property in them, to supply the want of their own. A man, for instance, has been guilty of murder, adultery, and all the most horrid crimes, during a long life ; but he repents on his death-bed ; the Priest gives him absolution, and his soul goes to Purgatory. There he might be for millions of years ; but if you can procure him a full or plenary indulgence from the Pope, or if he obtained it before death, all the merits which he wanted are given him, and he flies direct to heaven.

R. Sir, are you really in earnest ?

A. You have only to look into the *London Roman Catholic Directory* and you will find the appointed days, when every individual of that persuasion is empowered by the Pope to liberate one soul out of Purgatory by means of a plenary indulgence. These indulgences are sold in Spain by the King, who buys them from the Pope, and retails them with great profit. I have told you, my friend, and will continue to prove it, that there is not a doctrine for which the Church of Rome contends against the Protestants, but is a source of profit or power (which comes to the same) in the hands of the Clergy. Indeed, I could fill volumes upon this subject ; but time presses, and I must not omit saying a few words about confession. Do you not perceive, in an instant, that whoever has a man's conscience in his keeping, must have the whole man in his power ?

R. It appears to me impossible to doubt it; and, in fact, the better the man, the more he must be in the power of his Priest, for the Priest is his conscience, and the good man is most anxious to follow that which conscience suggests.

A. Never, my good friend, was a plan of usurpation and tyranny set up that can equal that of the Church of Rome in boldness. Her object is to deprive men both of their understanding and their will, and make them blind tools of her own. She proclaims that the perfection of faith consists in reducing one's mind to an implicit belief in whatever doctrines she holds, without any examination, or with a previous resolution to abide by her decision whether, after examination, they appear to you true or false. She then declares a renunciation of one's conscience into the hands of her Priests the very height of human perfection. Let those who in England are trying every method of disguising the Roman Catholic doctrines, shew a single pious book of common reputation in the Roman Catholic Church, which does not make unlimited obedience to a Confessor the safest and most perfect way to salvation. No, I should not hesitate to assert it in the hearing of all the world: in the same proportion as a Roman Catholic has an understanding and a will of his own upon religious matters, or matters connected in any way with religion, in that same degree he acts against the duties to which he is bound by his religious profession.

R. I do not well understand the Romanist belief on the necessity of confession.

A. The Romanist Church makes the confession of every sin by *thought, word, and deed*, necessary to receive absolution from a Priest; and teaches that, without absolution, when there is a possibility of obtaining it, God will not grant remission of sins. The most sincere repentance, according to the Catholics, is not sufficient to save a sinner, without

confession and absolution, when there is a possibility of applying to a Priest. On the other hand, they assert that even imperfect repentance, a sorrow arising from the fear of hell, which they call *attrition*, will save a sinner who confesses and receives absolution. The evident object of doctrines so inconsistent with the letter and spirit of the Scriptures, is, no doubt, that of making the priesthood absolute masters of the people's consciences. They must some time or other (every Roman Catholic is, indeed, bound to confess at least once a year under pain of excommunication) intrust a Priest with the inmost secrets of their hearts; and this, under the impression that if any one sin is suppressed from a sense of shame, absolution makes them guilty of sacrilege. The effects of this bondage, the reluctance which young people, especially, have to overcome, and the frequency of their making up their minds to garble confession, in spite of their belief that they increase the number and guilt of their sins by silence, are evils which none but a Roman Catholic Priest can be perfectly acquainted with.

R. I thought, Sir, that confession acted as a check upon men's consciences, and that it often caused restitution of ill-gotten money.

A. I never hear that paltry plea, so frequently used by Roman Catholic writers in this country, without indignation. It seems as if they wished to bribe men's love of money to the support of their doctrines. In a case where the main interests of religion and morality are so deeply concerned, it is a sort of insult to hold up the chance of recovering money through the hands of a Priest, as if to draw the attention from the monstrous evils which are inseparable from the Romanist confession. The truth is, that restitution is not a whit more probable among Roman Catholics, than among any other denomination of Christians. There is not a Protestant who does not firmly believe the necessity of restitution in

order to obtain pardon from God. Though I have lived only fifteen years in a Protestant country, the voluntary restitution of a sum of money by a poor person, whom the grace of God had called to a truly Christian course of life, has happened within my notice. I acted as a Confessor, in Spain, for many years, and from my own experience can assure you, that confession does not add one single chance of restitution. I believe, on the contrary, that the generality of Roman Catholics depend so much on the mysterious power which they attribute to the absolution of the Priest, that they greatly neglect the conditions on which that absolution is often given. The Protestant, who earnestly and sincerely wishes for pardon from God, knows that he cannot obtain it unless he is equally earnest in his endeavours to make restitution; but when the Romanist has assured the Confessor that he will try his best to indemnify those he has injured, the words of absolution are to him a sort of charm, that removes the guilt at once, and consequently relieves his uneasiness about restitution. One of the greatest evils of confession is, that it has changed the genuine *repentance* preached in the Gospel—that conversion and change of life which is the only true external sign of the remission of sins through Christ—into a ceremony which silences remorse at the slight expence of a doubtful, temporary sorrow for past offences. As the day of confession approaches (which, for the greatest part, is hardly once a year) the Romanist grows restless and gloomy. He mistakes the shame of a disgusting disclosure for sincere repentance of his sinful actions. He, at length, goes through the disagreeable task, and feels relieved. The old score is now cancelled, and he may run into spiritual debt with a lighter heart. This I know from my own experience, both as Confessor and as Penitent. In the same characters, and from the same experience, I can assure you that the practice

of confession is exceedingly injurious to the purity of mind enjoined in the Scriptures. "Filthy communication" is inseparable from the confessional: the Priest, in the discharge of the duty imposed on him by his Church, is bound to listen to the most abominable description of all manner of sins. He must inquire into every circumstance of the most profligate course of life. Men and women, the young and the old, the married and the single, are bound to describe to the Confessor the most secret actions and thoughts, which are either sinful in themselves, or may be so from accidental circumstances. Consider the danger to which the Priests themselves are exposed—a danger so imminent, that the Popes have, on two occasions, been obliged to issue the most severe laws against Confessors who openly attempt the seduction of their female penitents. I will not, however, press this subject, because it cannot be done with sufficient delicacy. Let me conclude by observing, that no invention of the Roman Church equals this, as regards the power it gives to the Priesthood. One of the greatest difficulties to establish a free and rational government in Popish countries arises from the opposition, which free and equal laws meet with, from the Priests in the confessional. A confessor can promote even treason with safety, in the secrecy which protects his office. But without alluding to political reforms, the influence of the King's Confessors, when the monarch is a pious man, is known to be so great in Catholic countries, that when there was a kind of Parliament in Arragon, a law was made to prevent the King from choosing his own Priest, and the election was reserved to the Parliament called *Cortes*.

R. I cannot help wondering how the Church of Rome could persuade men to submit to such a revolting and dangerous practice as that of confession.

A. This enormous abuse grew up gradually and imperceptibly, together with the whole of the Ro-

manist system. It was the practice, in the beginning of the Christian Church, to exclude the scandalous sinners from public worship, till they had shown their repentance by confessing their misconduct before the congregation. This discipline was found, in the course of some time, to be impracticable ; and the act of humiliation, which at first was required to be public, was changed into a private acknowledgment to the Bishop of such sins only as had occasioned the exclusion of the sinner from Church at the time of worship. The Bishops, a little after, began to refer such acts of public reconciliation with the Church to some of their Priests. The growing ignorance of after times made people believe that this act of external reconciliation was a real absolution of the moral guilt of sin ; and the Church of Rome, with that perpetual watchfulness by which she has never omitted an opportunity of increasing her power, foisted upon the Christian world what she calls the Sacrament of Penance, obliging her members, as they wish for pardon of their sins, to reveal them to a Priest.

R. Is there nothing in Scripture to support that practice ?

A. Nothing but the word *confessing*, which, as you will observe, means only, wherever it occurs, the acknowledgment of our sins before God ; or that of our mutual faults, to our fellow Christians. “ *Confess your faults one to another ;*” says St. James *. The Romanist will make us believe, that by *one to another* the holy Apostle means confessing to the Priest. By thus distorting the sense of the Scripture and calling in the convenient help of their own invented tradition, they have set no limits to their encroachments upon the spiritual liberty of the Christian world. Their love of power had, indeed, carried them so far, that in enlarging the foundations

* Chap. iii. ver. 16.

of their influence, they established some of their doctrines without even a word in the Scriptures on which to build their fanciful systems. Did you ever find any mention of relics in the Bible; or do you recollect that it ever mentions images, but to forbid the worshipping of them?

R. Certainly not. But do you believe, Sir, that relics and images are also instruments of power to the Church of Rome?

A. The city of Rome has carried on, for ages, a trade in bones, which, besides the donations in money, made by those, who from all parts of the world came or sent thither to procure them, has been the cause of building churches, with large endowments for the clergy, in almost every province in Christendom.

R. But were those bones really from the bodies of the Saints whose names they gave to them?

A. Nothing can equal the impudence with which the bones really taken out of the public burial grounds, where the ancient Romans buried their slaves, have been sent about under the names of all the Martyrs, Confessors, and Virgins, mentioned in the Roman Catholic legends. The Pope claims the power of what is called *christening* relics, and the devout Romanists, believe, that when their Holy Father has thus given a name to a skull or a thigh bone, it is equally valuable as if it had been taken from the body of their favourite Saint. They are not generally aware that what is thus *christened*, is probably part of the skeleton of some ancient heathen. But to give you an idea of the credulity which the Popes have encouraged on this point, I have seen the treasury of relics which belongs to the kings of Spain; where the Monk who keeps it, shows to all who come to visit the Church of the *Escorial*, near Madrid, the whole body, as it is pretended, of one of the children who were put to death by Herod. But there is still a more

monstrous piece of impudence in the same exhibition. A glass vial, set in gold, is shown, with some milk of the Virgin Mary. These and a hundred other such relics are presented to be worshipped by the people; all duly certified by the Pope or his ministers. At the Cathedral of Seville, the town where I was born, there is among other relics, one of the teeth of Christopher, a Saint who is said to have been a giant. The tooth was procured from Rome, and is to be seen in a silver and glass casket, through which the holy relic may be admired by the worshippers. It is clear, however, that the tooth, before which the Pope allows his spiritual children to kneel, belonged to a huge animal of the elephant kind. These impositions have been at all times carried on so carelessly by the Romish priesthood, that it was necessary, in some cases, to declare that the bodies of some saints had been miraculously multiplied; else people would have discovered the fraud by finding the same Saint at different places. The priests themselves are often aware of these absurdities; but they must bow their heads in silence. I will, however, tell you a good joke of a French Priest of high rank, who, having no religion himself, as it often happens to those of his profession in Roman Catholic countries, submitted quietly to the established superstition, though he would now and then give vent to a humorous sneer. He had been traveling in Italy, and in the Catholic parts of Germany, where the collection of relics, kept in every great Church, had been boastingly displayed to him. The Priests of a famous Abbey in France were doing the same, when among other wonders, "here," they said to the traveller, "is the head of John the Baptist."—"Praised be heaven!" answered the waggish Priest, "this is the third head of the holy Baptist which I have been happy enough to hold in my hands!"

R. I hope the jolly Priest did not pay dear for his wit.

A. It would have been a serious matter in Spain : but there has always existed a very strong party of disguised infidels in France, where the Pope never succeeded in his attempts to establish the Inquisition. The consequence was, that the Priests were greatly checked by the general laugh which was often raised against them. He that would know genuine Popery, must go to Spain—the country where it has been allowed to grow and unfold itself into full size. There you would see all the engines of Rome at work, and perfectly understand the true and original object of her inventions. To show you at one glance the benefit derived by the Priests from image worship, I will tell you what happened at Madrid, during a residence of three years, which I made in that most Catholic capital. In one of the meanest parts of the town the ragged children, who are always running about the streets, found an old picture which had been thrown, with other rubbish, upon a dunghill. Not knowing what the picture was, they tied it to a piece of rope, and were dragging it about, when an old woman in the neighbourhood, looked at the canvass, and found upon it the head of a Virgin Mary. Her screams of horror at the profanation which she beheld scared away the children, and the old woman was left in possession of the treasure. The gossips of the neighbourhood were anxious to make some amends to the picture for the past neglect and ill-treatment, and they all contributed towards the expence of burning a lamp, day and night, before it, in the old woman's house. A priest getting scent of what was going on, took the scratched Virgin under his patronage, framed the canvass, and added another light. All the rich folks who heard of this new-found image, came to pray before it, and gave something to the Priest and

the old woman, who were now in close partnership. In a very short time the amount of the daily donations enabled the joint proprietors of the picture, to build a fine Chapel, with a comfortable house adjoining it for themselves. The Chapel was crowded from morning till night; not a female, high or low, but firmly believed that her life and safety depended upon the favour of that particular picture: the rich endeavoured to obtain it by large sums of money for masses to be performed, and candles to be burnt before it; and the poor stinted their necessary food to throw a mite into the box which hung at the door of the chapel.—I do not relate to you old stories; I state what I myself have seen. Yet, what happened at Madrid under my own eyes, had constantly taken place in the Popish kingdoms of Europe, till the Reformation gave a check to the Romanist Priesthood. There is scarcely a town or village of some note in Europe but had a rich sanctuary, where Monks lived, mostly in vice and idleness, at the expence of the neighbourhood. The origin of these places was perfectly similar every where; a shepherd found an image of the Virgin in the hollow of a tree, (most assuredly placed there on purpose to be thus found); an old woman drew another from the bottom of a well; a stranger had asked for lodgings for a night at a cottage—he was not to be found in the morning; but, on searching the room where he slept, a small Virgin Mary was discovered. The nearest Bishop was sure to come with his Priests, holding lighted tapers, and carry such images in procession to his church; and declare that they had been miraculously sent to the faithful! Those found in the tree and well, had fallen from heaven: the vanished stranger was an angel, who had carved the image during the night.

R. Such images put me in mind of what is said in the *Acts of the Apostles*, about the great Diana of the Ephesians, which had fallen from heaven, and

for the sake of which the people made a riot, in which they would have murdered Saint Paul*.

A. The Church of Rome has so closely copied the idolatrous superstitions of the Pagans, that all persons not blinded by the fanatic zeal of that Church, are struck with the great similarity. Their lighted candles, their frankincense, their images from heaven, many ceremonies of their mass, many forms of their private worship, are just the same as formed a part of the service done formerly to the idols of the heathens. Even the manner of acknowledging the pretended miracles by hanging up in the temples little figures of wax, or pictures representing the part of the body which is supposed to have been supernaturally healed, or the accident from which the person escaped, is constantly practised, wherever the Pope alone directs his flock, without fearing a laugh from Protestant neighbours. If the figures acknowledging miracles performed by images throughout the realms of Popery, were to be reckoned, the miracles would amount to some hundreds a day.

R. But how can people believe in such a number of miracles?

A. The Church of Rome, my friend, is like a large and showy quack-medicine shop. There is not a disease, not an evil, for which the Pope has not a *labelled* Saint. People when in fear of actual suffering, are apt to receive a certain relief from hope. You have only to say, try this or that medicine, and you will see the patient's eyes light up, like the poor man who has a kind of foretaste of riches from the moment he purchases a lottery ticket. The Pope's spiritual quack-medicines are to be applied without doubt or hesitation, and not to be given up in despair; all you are allowed is to add some new Saint to your former patron. Well, a poor creature

* Acts xix. 35.

is writhing with the tooth-ache; he goes to the Pope's shop, and finds that Saint Apollonia had all her teeth pulled out, and therefore takes pity on those who suffer in a similar way. He prays, buys a print of the Saint, and lights up a candle before it. If the pain goes off, Saint Apollonia cured him; if at last the tooth is drawn, Saint Apollonia blunted the pain of the operation. So it is with every disease, with every undertaking,—a journey, a speculation; even the most sinful and wicked actions are often commended by the lower classes of Roman Catholics to the care of their patron Saint. Of this I have the most positive certainty. Miracles being thus expected at all times, and means supposed to possess a supernatural virtue, being constantly used, under the idea that the most effectual way of receiving the looked-for benefit, is a strong persuasion of their efficacy, and a rejection of all doubt, which, they believe, offends the implored Saint; every accident is construed into a wonder: the failures are attributed to a want of faith, and the success, either complete or partial, which would have infallibly taken place in the natural course of things, is confidently proclaimed as a display of supernatural power. Add to this, that there is a very common feeling among the Roman Catholics, of the same kind as that which anticipates thanks for the sake of securing favour. They, in fact, give credit to their Saints beyond what they really believe, and flatter them by public acknowledgements, which they mean as a before-hand payment, which, in common honesty, must bind the receiver to complete the work. All this is done, not with an intent to deceive, but from that utter weakness of mind which a man cannot fail to contract, when brought up under a complete system of quackery, either spiritual or temporal: a system which encourages all sorts of fears, to ensure the sale of imaginary remedies against them.

R. Do you think, Sir, that all Roman Catholics are in such a state of mind ?

A. By no means. There are various circumstances which make individual minds resist, more or less, the influence of their Church. But this I can assure you before the whole world, that whoever submits entirely to the guidance of Rome, must become a weak, superstitious being, unless his natural temper should dispose him to join with superstition the violence and persecuting spirit of the bitterest bigotry.

R. If you can prove what you so broadly assert, I shall infer, that while the Roman Catholics uphold their Church for the sake of possessing an unerring guide, and thus having a decided advantage over the Protestant Churches, who allow their members to exercise their judgment upon religious matters ; it is only individual judgment and natural good sense that make Romanism assume a decent appearance among us.

A. Keep to your inference till we can renew this conversation, when I trust I shall satisfy you that it is supported by the most undeniable facts. Remember that I undertake to prove, that the Church of Rome leads her members into the most abject and lamentable superstition, credulity, and bigotry ; that she keeps her subjects in bondage by the most tyrannical means ; and that she is always ready to force men into subjection to her authority, in the same measure as they are off their guard to resist her encroachments.

DIALOGUE IV.

Superstitious Character of the Church of Rome : her Doctrine on Penance : her Miracles examined : Misery produced by her Will-worship : Apostolic Doctrine of Justification : Effects of Celibacy and Religious Vows : Persecuting Spirit of Romanism.

Author. I COME prepared to describe to you the character of the Church of Rome; and, in the first place, I am to prove that she exerts her whole power in making her members superstitious. I must, however, ask you, before I proceed, whether you have a clear idea of what is meant by the word *superstition*.

Reader. I believe I have a tolerable good notion of it; but to say the truth, I should be at a loss to state clearly what I understand by that word.

A. My notion of it may be expressed thus : superstition consists in credulity, hopes, and fears, about invisible and supernatural things, upon fanciful and slight grounds. We call that man superstitious who is ready to believe any idle story of ghosts and witches; who nails a horse-shoe upon the ship or barn, which he hopes by that means to preserve in safety: and dreads evil consequences from going out of doors the first time in the morning, with his left foot foremost.

R. Does the Church of Rome encourage superstitions of this kind?

A. She certainly encourages the same state of mind, though not exactly upon the same things. Every Church may be compared to a great school or establishment for religious education. I will represent to you a pupil of that school, that you may infer what is taught in it, and I will draw the picture from various Roman Catholics whom I have inti-

mately known. Imagine my Romanist friend retiring to his bed in the night. The walls of the room are covered with pictures of all sizes. Upon a table there is a wooden or brass figure of our Saviour nailed to the cross, with two wax candles, ready to be lighted, at each side. Our Romanist carefully locks the door; lights up the candles, kneels before the cross, and beats his breast with his clenched right hand, till it rings again in a hollow sound. It is probably a Friday, a day of penance: the good man looks pale and weak. I know the reason—he has made but one meal on that day, and that on fish; had he tasted meat, he feels assured he should have subjected his soul to the pains of hell. But the mortifications of the day are not over. He unlocks a small cupboard, and takes out a skull, which he kisses, and places upon the table at the foot of the crucifix. He then strips off part of his clothes, and with a scourge, composed of small twisted ropes hardened with wax, lays stoutly to the right and left, till his bare skin is ready to burst with accumulated blood. The discipline, as it is called, being over, he mutters several prayers, turning to every picture in the room. He then rises to go to bed; but before he ventures into it, he puts his finger into a little cup which hangs at a short distance over his pillow, and sprinkles with the fluid it contains, the bed and the room in various directions, and finally moistens his forehead in the form of a cross. The cup, you must know, contains holy water—water in which a Priest has put some salt, making over it the sign of the cross several times, and saying some prayers, which the Church of Rome has inserted for this purpose in the mass-book. The use of that water, as our Roman Catholic has been taught to believe, is to prevent the devil from approaching the places and things which have been recently sprinkled with it; and he does not feel himself safe in his bed without the

precaution which I have described. The holy water has, besides, an internal and spiritual power of washing away venial sins—those slight sins, I mean, which, according to the Romanists, if unrepented, or unwashed away by holy-water, or the sign of the cross made by the hand of a Bishop, or some other five or six methods, which I will not trouble you with, will keep the venial sinner in purgatory for a certain time. The operations of the devout Roman Catholic are probably not yet done. On the other side of the holy-water cup, there hangs a frame holding a large cake of wax, with figures raised by a mould, not unlike a large butter-pat. It is an *Agnus Dei*, blest by the Pope, which is not to be had except it can be imported from Rome. I believe the wax is kneaded with some earth from the place where the bones of the supposed Martyrs are dug up. Whoever possesses one of these spiritual treasures, enjoys the benefit of a great number of indulgences; for, each kiss impressed on the wax, gives him the whole value of fifty or one hundred days employed in doing penance and good works; the amount of which is to be struck off the debt which he has to pay in Purgatory. I should not wonder if our good man, before laying himself to sleep, were to feel about his neck, for his rosary or beads. Perhaps he has one of a particular value, and like that which I was made to wear next my skin, when a boy. A Priest had brought it from Rome, where it had been made, if we believe the certificates, of bits of the very stones with which the first Martyr, Stephen, was put to death. Being satisfied that the rosary hangs still on his neck, he arranges its companion, the scapulary, formed of two square pieces of the stuff which is exclusively worn by some religious order. By means of the scapulary, he is assured either that the Virgin Mary will not allow him to remain in Purgatory beyond the Saturday next to the day of his death; or he is made partaker

of all the penances and good works performed by the religious of the order to which the scapulary belongs. At last, having said a prayer to the Angel who, he believes, keeps a constant guard over him, the devout Romanist composes himself to sleep, touching his forehead, his breast, and the two shoulders, to form the figure of a cross. The prayer and ceremonies of the morning are not unlike those of the night. Armed with the sprinkling of holy water, he proceeds to mass: if it happens to be one of the privileged days in which souls may be delivered out of Purgatory, you will see him saying a certain number of prayers at different altars. He will repeat his rosary in honour of the Virgin Mary, dropping through his fingers either fifty-five or seventy-seven beads, which are strung in the form of a necklace. There may be a blessing with the *Sacrament*, which the good Catholic will not lose, for the sake of the plenary indulgence which the Pope grants to such as are present. On that occasion you would see him kneeling and beating his breast, while the Priest, in a splendid cloak of silk and gold, in the midst of lighted candles and the smoke of frankincense, makes the sign of the cross with a consecrated wafer, inclosed between two pieces of glass set in gold.—It would, indeed, be an endless task were I to enumerate all the methods and contrivances of this kind recommended by the Church of Rome to all her members, and practised by all who are not careless of their spiritual concerns.—These are facts which no honest Roman Catholic will venture to deny. I therefore ask whether, since revelation is the only means we have of distinguishing between religion and superstition—between things and acts which really can influence our manner of being when we shall be removed to the invisible world; and fanciful contrivances which there is no reason to suppose connected with our spiritual welfare—I ask whether the whole system of the Church of Rome, for the attainment of Chris-

tian virtue, is not a chain of superstitious practices, calculated to accustom the mind to imaginary fear, and fly to the Church for fanciful remedies? Saint Paul had a prophetic eye on this adulterated Christianity when he cautioned the Colossians*, saying: *Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of a holyday; Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding the head from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances (touch not, taste not, handle not, which all are to perish with the using) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have, indeed, a shew of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body.* I cannot conceive a more perfect resemblance than that which exists between the picture of a devout Romanist, and the *will-worship* described in this passage. Observe the distinction of days, the prohibition of certain meats, the worshipping of angels, the numerous ordinances, the mortification and neglect of the body; and most of all, the losing hold of the head, Christ, and substituting a constant endeavour to *increase* spiritually by *fleshly*, that is, external means, instead of fortifying by a simple and spiritual worship, the *bands and joints* through which alone the Christian can have nourishment, *and increase with the increase of God.*

R. I confess that the likeness is very striking. But I wish to know if all the *will-worship* of the Romanists is fully recommended by their Church.

A. It is in the most solemn and powerful manner. You have only to look into the devotional books

* Chap. ii.

which are used among the Romanists, and you will find their bishops encouraging this kind of religious discipline in the most unqualified terms. I could read to you innumerable passages confirming and recommending more *fleshly ordinances* than ever the Jews observed: and this too, in English Roman Catholic books, which, for fear of censure on the part of the Protestants, are generally more shy of disclosing the whole system of their Church, than those published abroad. But what settles the point at once, and shews that it is the Church of Rome, and not any private individual, that adulterates the character and temper of Christian virtue, I have only to refer you to their Common Prayer-Book, which they call the *Breviary*. Now, that is a book not only published and confirmed by three Popes, but which they oblige their whole Clergy to read daily, for at least an hour and a half. Such, indeed, is the importance which the Church of Rome attaches to that Book, that she declares any Clergyman or Monk who omits, even less than an eighth part of the appointed daily reading, guilty of sin worthy of hell,—a mortal sin, which deprives man of the grace of God. The *Breviary* contains Psalms and Collects, and lives of Saints, for every day of the year. Those lives are given as examples of what the Church of Rome declares to be Christian perfection, and her members are, of course, urged to imitate them as far as it may possibly be in every one's power. Now, I can assure you, having been for many years forced to read the *Breviary* daily, that there is not one instance of a Saint, whose worship is not grounded, by the Church of Rome, mainly upon the most extravagant practice of external ceremonies, and the most shocking use of their imaginary virtue of penance.

R. What do they mean by penance?

A. The voluntary infliction of pain on themselves to expiate their sins.

R. Do they not believe in the atonement of Christ?

A. They believe that the atonement is enough to save them from hell, but not from a temporal punishment of sin.

R. But have they not *plenary indulgences* to satisfy for that temporal punishment?

A. So they believe; but the truth is, that they cannot understand themselves upon the subject of penance and indulgences. Penance, however, the Romanist Church recommends even at the expense of depraving the sense of the Gospel in their translations. As there is nothing in the New Testament which can make self-inflicted pain a Christian virtue, the Romanists, wanting a text to support their practices, have rendered the third verse of the 13th chapter of Luke, "unless ye be *penitent* ye shall all alike perish." Yet, this was not enough for their purpose, and as the same sentence is repeated in the fifth verse, there they slipt in the word *penance*. Their translation of that verse is, "unless ye shall do *penance* you shall all alike perish." By the use of this word they make their laity believe, that both confession, which they call *penance*, and all the bodily mortifications which go among them by the same name, are commanded by Christ.

R. That, Sir, I look upon as very unfair.

A. And the more so, my friend, as in the original Gospel, the word used by the inspired writer is the same in both verses, and cannot by any possibility mean any thing but a *change of the mind*, which we properly express by the word *repent*.

R. What, Sir, is the origin of their attachment to bodily mortification?

A. A mean estimate of the atonement of Christ; and the example of some fanatics whom, at an early period of the corruptions of Christianity, Rome declared to be saints and patterns of Evangelical virtue. The Monks, who took them for their models,

gained an unbounded influence in the Church : and both by the practice of some enthusiasts among them, and by the stories of miracles, which they reported as being the reward of their bodily mortification, confirmed the opinion of the great merit of penance among the laity. Here, also, the mutual aid of the doctrines invented by Rome, contributed to increase the error : for, as the Popes teach that the *indulgences* which they grant are taken from the treasure of merits collected by the Saints, it is the interest of those who expect to escape from Purgatory by the aid of indulgences, that the treasure of penances be well stocked ; and they greatly enjoy the accounts of wonderful mortifications which their Church gives them in her Prayer-book.

R. Do you think those accounts extravagant ?

A. I will give two or three, and you shall judge. You know that Saint Patrick is one of the most favourite Saints among the Irish Roman Catholics, as having been the first who introduced Christianity into their island. The Church of Rome gives the following account of his daily religious practices, holding him up, of course, as a pattern, which if few can fully copy, every one will be the more perfect as he endeavours to imitate. The *Breviary* tells the Roman Catholics, that when their patron Saint was a slave, having his master's cattle under his care, he used to rise before day-light, under the snows and rains of winter, to begin his usual task of praying *one hundred times* in the day, and again *one hundred times* in the night. When he was made a Bishop, we are told that he repeated every day the one hundred and fifty Psalms of the Psalter, with a collection of canticles and hymns, and two hundred collects besides. He made it also a daily duty to kneel three hundred times, and to make the sign of the cross with his hand eight hundred times a day. In the night he recited one hundred Psalms, and knelt two hundred times—passed one third of it up to the chin in cold water

repeating fifty Psalms more, and then rested for two or three hours on a stone pavement.

R. I cannot believe it possible for a man to perform what you have said, unless he had the strength and velocity of a steam engine. That account must be false.

A. I will not enter into the question of its probability; all I have to do with, is the principle which it inculcates and proposes to the Roman Catholics. External ceremonies, and a course of self-murdering practices, are proposed by the Church of Rome, in nine out of ten lives of her Saints, as objects of imitation. In the same spirit St. Catherine of Siena is represented as so addicted to the practice of fasting, that heaven, to indulge her in the performance of that pretended virtue, kept her, by miracle, without food from Ash-Wednesday till Whitsunday. So the *Breviary* proclaims before the face of the world.

R. But does not our Church recommend fasting as a religious practice?

A. The practice of checking our appetites, even those which we may indulge without sin, is a most useful exercise of the powers of the will over the inclinations of our passions. The man who cannot abstain from some savoury food, and is a slave to the cravings of his stomach, is little apt to control his inclinations when tempted to open sin. Upon this principle, and justly fearing that if the memory of fast was abolished, men might be inclined to believe that Protestantism encouraged gluttony and excess; the Church of England recommends a rational abstinence on certain days, which, especially when it is made to produce some savings to bestow upon the poor, must be acceptable in the sight of God. But neither are these fasts enjoined under the threat of damnation, as we find them in the Church of Rome, nor do they consist in a superstitious distinction, or quantity of food. The Roman

Catholic fast is intended to produce pain and suffering, which is the object of their penances : ours is a mere check laid upon indulgence, and even that is left to the discretion and free will of every individual.

R. How far does the Church of Rome recommend the infliction of pain, as penance ?

A. To an excess that destroys every year many well-meaning and ardent persons, especially young women of that communion. These deluded creatures read the lives of Saints set forth by their Church, and there they find many females who are said to have arrived at great perfection by living, like St. Elizabeth of Portugal, one half of the year on bread and water ; besides the constant use of scourging their bodies, sleeping on the naked ground, wearing bandages with points that run into the flesh, plunging into freezing water, and ten thousand other methods of gradually destroying life. The Roman Catholic Priests would make us believe that they always recommend penance in moderation. But when a young, tender, and ardent mind is taught that God is pleased by voluntary suffering, and reads that the Church of Rome has made Saints of those who killed themselves by penances, every thing which falls short of actual self-murder, will assume the appearance of moderation. The Church of Rome, in her Prayer-book or Breviary, commends Saint Theresa because "*her ardour in punishing the body was so vehement as to make her use hair shirts, chains, nettles, scourges, and even to roll herself among thorns, regardless of a diseased constitution.*" These are the words of the Breviary : from which the enthusiastic Roman Catholic properly infers, that to disregard a diseased constitution, and hasten death, is a virtue. That such is the effect of the Pope's lives of the Saints, is clear from what the Breviary relates of another female Saint, called Rose of Lima. She, it

is said in the Roman Catholic Prayer-book, "from a desire to imitate St. Catherine," wore day and night, three folds of an iron chain round her waist, a belt set with small needles, and an iron crown armed inside with points, all next the skin. She made to herself a bed of the unpolished trunks of trees, and filled up the chinks with pieces of broken pottery. The Breviary adds, that she did all this in spite of her "tortures from sickness," and was therefore frequently visited by saints, angels, and even our Saviour from heaven.

R. But, do Roman Catholics really believe in those visits?

A. A sincere Roman Catholic cannot disbelieve what his own Church so constantly teaches, without entertaining strange suspicions against the veracity of the organ and ground of his faith. Nothing can be more positively asserted, than these supernatural wonders; nothing more frequently repeated, than the thousands of miracles contained in the Breviary. If, therefore, a Roman Catholic believes them all, or the greatest part, he must be credulous like a child; if he disbelieves them all, or the greatest part, he must look on the Popes and the Church of Rome, either as a set of rogues, or of old women.

R. Are the miracles reported so unworthy of belief?

A. I could give you at once a satisfactory answer, just by relating some of the stories of miracles which the Roman Catholic Prayer-book contains. But I wish to settle a general point on this subject of miracles. What is your notion of a miracle?

R. I must repeat what I said when you asked me the same question as to superstition. I believe I know what a miracle is, and yet I cannot express myself clearly upon the subject.

A. A miracle is an evident interposition of God's power, by means of a change in the order which he has established in the visible world. I hope I shall

be able to make my meaning clearer, by a very familiar illustration. Do you know the construction of a clock?

R. No, Sir.

A. So much the better for my purpose. What would you say if you saw the hand of the Church clock go backward?

R. I should say the clock was out of repair.

A. What, if you saw it first point twelve, then instantly eleven, then in another moment run forward to one?

R. I should say somebody is behind moving the wheels: the watchmaker must be there.

A. Could you, without knowing the mechanism of the clock, be certain that the extraordinary change in its working was not the effect of mere accident?

R. If the clock had only stopt, or gone the wrong way, I might have supposed its being the effect of accident; but the change having, as we may say, a meaning, the experience of clocks which I have had all my life, is enough to convince me that the alteration in the course of the clock's working, cannot be the effect of chance.

A. Suppose, besides that a man had told you, while the clock was going regularly, that he was acquainted with the maker; that he knew he was behind the hour-plate, and that in proof of this, he would request him to move the hand backwards and forwards. Would you believe what he asserted, if you saw the clock acting accordingly?

R. Most certainly.

A. Well, then, if what we have said of the clock and the watchmaker, we apply, with due reverence, to the world which we see, and its great author, God; we shall have a pretty correct idea of miracles, and something like a rule to judge of them. The world, you know, and every thing in it, proceeds by established and invariable rules, infinitely more

wonderful and regular than the pointing of a clock, or of the most admirable piece of machinery. Without being able to penetrate into the manner in which life is supported, we feel no doubt that when a person has been laid four days in the grave, he cannot be brought to life by any regular operation of nature. Now, imagine yourself standing in the crowd which surrounded our Saviour before the grave of Lazarus. Observe how, lifting up his eyes, Jesus addresses himself to his Father, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Author and Giver of life; and says, *Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me: and I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth: and he that was dead came forth**. Would this change, in the usual laws of nature, this returning of the breath of life which had fled, be enough to convince you that the Maker of the world, though unseen, was really present and in direct communication with the visible person who had addressed him?

R. Most assuredly: just as I could not doubt that the watchmaker was certainly present, by seeing the clock-hand move against the regular and established order, at the desire of his friend, whom you supposed standing with me in the church-yard.

A. Let us still proceed with our illustration. Suppose that the people of the village having observed what passed between you, your friend, and the watchmaker, some boy came and told you, "Sir, while some of my companions were playing in the church-yard, the hour for school being on the point to strike, one of them cried out, Good mister watchmaker, put back the hand of the clock, and let us play another hour. As he said this the clock

* John xi. 41—44.

went back : this, Sir, is now done very frequently, and not only in our village, but all over the country." —Would you give the boy any credit?

R. I think I should be more inclined to give him a box on the ear.

A. Why?

R. Do you imagine me such a fool as to believe that a sensible man would be spoiling his clock, or altering the course of its working, to indulge the fancy of every idler? Why, Sir, I would not believe such a thing even upon better testimony than that of the children.

A. You are perfectly in the right, my friend ; and if you keep in mind the principles by which you have decided upon the case I have supposed, it will be very easy for you to form a correct opinion of the spirit which prevails in the Church of Rome, on the subject of miracles. The *Breviary*, to which I have so often referred in the course of the present conversation, speaks of miracles performed by the Popish Saints, as if they were the most frequent occurrences within the spiritual dominions of the Pope. Every Saint's life ends with an assurance that he performed "*innumerable* miracles." Of the trifling occasions of the pretended miracles, it is impossible to give you an idea but by relating the stories themselves. I will give you a few out of hundreds. To exalt the authority of the Pope, has at all times been the purpose of all the Romish contrivances. There is a ludicrous instance of this in the life of Pope St. John, which the Roman Catholic Prayer-book gives annually on the 27th of May. The whole Romanist Clergy are informed on that day, that Pope John being on a journey to Corinth, and in want of a quiet and comfortable horse, borrowed one, which the lady of a certain nobleman used to ride. The animal carried the Pope remarkably well ; but when the lady attempted to use it again, she was thrown off every time she ventured

upon the saddle. The Romish Prayer-book explains this with great gravity, saying, that "the horse felt indignant at having to carry a woman, after having had the Vicar of Christ upon his back."

R. I imagine, Sir, that the Romanists would say, that that miracle had a very important object; such as establishing the supremacy of the Pope.

A. Such evasions are indeed very common among them; but no sensible man can be at a loss to show their futility. Are not the Romanists ashamed to suppose, that when God had been silent in his Holy Scriptures, concerning Rome and the Pope, he would, by a kind of after-thought, make a horse become the expounder of his will? There are also a number of similar miracles told in the Breviary, evidently with the view of raising a great veneration for the relics which the Pope keeps at Rome, in order to draw people to visit that city, and spend their money among the unhappy inhabitants, whom his bad government keeps in a state of idleness and poverty. In the Bull or Proclamation which has been published for the *Jubilee* at Rome, in 1825, the Pope invites all Christians to take a journey to his great city, where, besides the benefit of a Plenary Indulgence, they will have the comfort of approaching the sepulchre of St. Peter and St. Paul; who are supposed to be buried in a certain place, though no mortal being has ever seen their bodies; and beholding the very manger in which our Saviour was laid at his birth, and all the instruments of his passion: that is to say, the cross on which he hung, the nails which fastened him to it, the lance which pierced his side, the very crown of thorns which was upon his head; for the Pope pretends to be in possession of all those relics. You are to observe, that the existence of such objects not having been heard of for more than three hundred years after the death of Christ, it was necessary to impose

them on the credulity of the world by means of pretended miracles. So we are told, that the mother of the Emperor Constantine having employed some men to dig in Mount Cavalry, three crosses were found ; and being in doubt, which was the one on which our Saviour died, she applied them successively on a dead body, which came to life again when the true cross touched it. This story was published when the Roman Emperor Constantine having become a Christian, because it answered his political views to gain the favour of his Christian subjects,—his mother and the men in power could stop the mouth of any one who should attempt to expose or contradict the imposture. So much for the true cross, the bits of which that are worshipped through the Catholic countries would, if collected in one place, amount to more splinters than might be taken from the main-mast of a man of war. How the nails, lance, and crown of thorns were proved to be those used at our Saviour's passion, we are not told. When people have believed in the true cross they will easily worship the nails, and even our Saviour's coat, which was kept at Constantinople before that city was taken by the Turks. These impostures were soon received as Gospel by the establishment of holidays in their honour, and adding a miracle now and then, when some new object of idolatry was to be palmed on the credulity of our forefathers. The *Breviary* gives a curious one to show the sanctity of another of the Roman relics. It informs us, that about the time when it became a fashion to discover every thing that had belonged to Christ and his Apostles, and Popes, Emperors, and Empresses joined to set up new relics, the Pope was in possession of an iron chain, with which St. Peter had, four hundred years before, been bound at Rome. The Emperor's wife, on a visit to Jerusalem, received there as a present, another chain, which according to the Bishop of that city, had

been on Peter's hands when he was liberated from prison by an angel. Having brought it to Rome, the Pope took both chains in his hands, and bringing them near each other to compare them, both joined into one at a jerk, so as to appear but one piece worked by the same smith.

R. These, Sir, are more like jugglers' tricks than miracles.

A. Rome, however, has a great advantage over poor jugglers, who are closely watched by the eyes of an incredulous multitude, where every man is anxious to discover the tricks. But the Pope by nursing up every Roman Catholic in the certain belief of such stories, needs no proof or testimony, not even common caution, to foist the most monstrous miracles upon the people. What man of common sense would remain in the Church of England, if our Prayer-book had it, as a most certain fact, that Westminster Abbey had been built at Paris, in France; and that some hundred years ago, it had taken a flight to the French coast, opposite to Dover: and having rested there for a few years, had, in a second flight, placed itself where it now stands?

R. Has the Breviary any story like this?

A. Perfectly like it. It relates that the house in which the Virgin Mary lived, in the land of Judea, was carried through the air by angels, to the Coast of Dalmatia, and from thence to Loretto, in the Pope's dominions, where it is worth millions to the Popish Clergy; such is the number of Pilgrims that go to visit it, and the large and valuable presents which, for many centuries, have been sent by Roman Catholic Princes and Noblemen, to ornament it.

R. There is such falsehood in the face of that story, that I would not believe any thing, in the shape of miracle, through the same channel.

A. Yet there are Roman Catholics, who rather than give way to the Protestants, will endanger the

credit of the whole Gospel, by asserting that he who will not believe in the miracles which are reported on the authority of the Church of Rome, has no reason to receive those of the Gospel. So blind and headstrong is party-spirit! Now, if there was no other reason to reject the testimony of Rome upon these points, but that she does, to this day, propagate stories which she knows to be false, such as the monstrous fable of the house of Loretto; nothing else would be wanting to condemn their almost blasphemous comparison. Besides this, consider, my friend, the difference between believing the testimony of the Apostles, whose attestations we have in writing, and giving credit to the most idle reports, of which nobody knows the origin: between believing witnesses who sealed their testimony with their blood, and trusting Popes and Cardinals, who are enriched by their supposed miracles, and idle monks to whom a new saint of their order, is worth more than an estate of a thousand acres: between miracles performed in the midst of incredulous and powerful enemies, and wonders brought to light by the combined influence of Emperors and Popes, and publishing among people who, being brought up in the most superstitious credulity, expect miracles at every turn!

R. A man must surely be blind to make the comparison!

A. The credulity, my friend, which such a Prayer-book as the Breviary cannot fail to foster in the Romish Church, must make every sincere Roman Catholic an exceptionable witness on miraculous subjects. Men think they see, what they wish to see: the least circumstance is turned into evidence of a miracle by credulous minds, impressed with the desire of supporting the interest of their Church, and taught by that Church that there is *piety* in implicit belief, and sin in caution and doubt. I cannot acquit the leaders of the Church of Rome

of at least a connivance with a system of imposture, when I see the present Pope declaring a silly monk a Saint worthy of public worship : and relating as one of his miracles, that by making the sign of the cross over two birds, which were on the table, dressed and dished, they took flight and disappointed the company. No,—this is an old story, repeated of many Saints ; and those who publish it, upon their authority, must know it to be false. I will not charge with the same kind of design, every one of our folks, who firmly believe in the miracles of Prince Hohenlohe. As they all relate to diseases, the least accidental change for the better, produces the strongest assurance of a miracle in those who have heated their fancies in the full expectation of seeing it worked. We will not, therefore, compare their testimony with that of the Apostles and first disciples, till these good Romanists shall, in large numbers, publish the resurrection of one of their friends, publicly executed, and attest the fact with their blood. This is what the Apostles and the immediate disciples of Jesus did. The church of Rome manages the attestations of her miracles in a very different manner : she assures us that no person is declared a Saint by her authority, without the performance of three remarkable miracles ; but by an assumed air of caution, she commonly defers the trial of these miracles till some hundred years after the death of the candidate for Saintship. This spirit of delusion, this determination of allowing the people to be deceived in every possible way that can attach them to the Romish communion, is most glaringly evinced in the annual jugglery performed at Naples, under the eyes of the Pope. The Patron Saint of that town is a saint Januarius, part of whose blood, though shed in martyrdom, as they say, (for there is no dependance on these reports, even as to the existence of some of the Roman Catholic Saints) more than fifteen hundred years ago, is

still preserved in a vial. On the day of the saint's festival, the Bishop surrounded by a crowd of Priests, and a multitude of lighted tapers and clouds of the smoke of frankincense, takes the vial in his hands, where a red lump appears in an upper division. The people in crowds are kneeling in the Church expecting the yearly miracle with the greatest anxiety, while the Bishop handles the vial every way, till the lump begins to melt, and falls in drops into the lower part of the glass. Upon this, the bells are rung, the guns are fired, and the whole town is in a state of rapture. The trick is so gross, that there is not a Priest or a man of common sense at Naples, that is not convinced that the red clot is a certain composition which melts with very little heat—the heat that the hands of a Priest and a crowded church will produce. Sometimes it is a longer time in being brought about, and the populace, for whom the juggle is performed, are in a state of great fear and discontent. On one of these occasions, a very excellent friend of mine, an English officer, was near the Priests; but the melting being delayed, he was advised by one of them to retire, for the mob would have torn him to pieces, from a notion that the miracle was delayed on account of his being a Protestant. When the French, during the Revolution war, were in possession of Naples, the Priests wished to raise a tumult against them, and on the day of Saint Januarius, the blood would not melt. The mob were ready to take up arms, when the French General sent word to the Archbishop, that if the miracle was not performed instantly, he would play the artillery upon his palace. This broad hint had its desired effect: the blood began to drop, and all was quiet. A Church which thus boldly tampers with the credulity of her members, and ventures upon a regular annual imposture, will assert any thing in regard to former times. Of Saints who lived in early ages, she publishes the most glaring

falsehoods, though every man of common learning knows that the records in which they are related, are most impudent forgeries. From such documents it is, that Rome amuses her Clergy with the miracles of early Martyrs, who could not be burnt, though shut up within a house in flames; who would not sink, though thrown into the sea; who came unhurt out of a cauldron of boiling pitch and fat; who lived two or three days with their heads nearly cut off; and who walked three miles with their heads in their hands.

R. Monstrous! and is all that still read in the Roman Catholic Prayer-book?

A. It is, day by day, the whole year through, and under heavy penalties for the omission. Were I to translate the stories of Saints from the Breviary, you would imagine I was amusing you with tales of goblins and fairies. You would hear of three different Saints who have sailed on their cloaks, as if on board a ship, carrying sometimes several monks with them. In that manner, we are assured by the Pope, that St. Francis de Paula crossed the Strait of Sicily; St. Raymond de Pennafort, from Majorca to Barcelona; and St. Hyacinth, a large river in Poland, swollen by a flood. You would hear of a St. Francis of Rome, who would stand for a long time in a river without being wet; and who used to quench her thirst with grapes produced, by miracle, in the heart of winter. You would find a Saint Peter of Alcantara, who was provided with a roof of snow, under which he might pass the night, and who made his staff grow into a fig-tree. There is scarcely a Saint who did not begin to work miracles from his birth; nay, we are told of St. Bridget, that she saved her mother from drowning, being as yet in the womb. The bells used to ring of their own accord when Saints were born, as happened with St. John *a Deo*, St. Peter Celestinus, and many others; a swarm of bees built a honey-comb in the

hands of St. Ambrose, St. Peter Nolasculus, St. Isidore, and several other saintly babes, while in their cradles. Another baby Saint had her face changed into a rose, from which her name was given to her. These holy children often speak before they are five months old, as was the case with Saint Philip Beniti, who at that age scolded his mother for not giving alms to some begging friars. All these wonders, and ten thousand others still more absurd, are asserted in the Prayer-book of the Church of Rome. I have given a copious collection of them in my *Evidence against Catholicism*, where, lest any one should suspect I was not in earnest, I have copied the original words in Latin, at the bottom of the page.

R. I cannot help thinking, that though the Church of Rome is not the best school for Christian instruction, it must afford a kind of spiritual amusement (spiritual, I say, because I cannot find another word) to her followers. Her ceremonies, her miracles, her relics, must afford an agreeable variety to those who have never doubted her creed.

A. Ah, my friend, nothing can be more deceitful than the appearance of that Church. There is more misery produced by her laws and institutions than I can possibly describe, though I have drunk her cup of bitterness to the dregs. In the first place, a sincere mind which is made to depend for the hope of salvation on any thing but faith and unbounded trust in the Saviour, can never enjoy that Christian peace "which passeth all understanding." I have known some of the best and most conscientious Roman Catholics which that Church can ever boast of; my own mother and sisters were among them; I have been Confessor not a few years, and heard the true state of mind of the most religious Nuns, and such as were looked upon as living Saints by all the inhabitants of my town. From this intimate knowledge of their state, I do assure you that they are, for the greatest part, so full of doubts about their salvation,

as not unfrequently to be driven to madness. In their anxiety to accumulate *merits* (for their Church teaches them that their penances and religious practices are deserving of reward in heaven) they involve themselves in a maze of external practices. Then comes the fears of sin in the very things which they undertake under the notion of pleasing God ; and as they believe that their works are to be weighed and valued in strict justice, the sincerity of their hearts cannot help discovering not only that they are nothing worth, but that sin is often mixed with their performance. In this state they are never impressed with the true scriptural doctrine, that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, whenever the sinner with a lively faith receives him as his only Saviour. They are not taught that good works are the fruit of true faith ; but that they bear a true share with Christ in the work of our salvation. They are thus forced by their doctrines, to look to themselves for the hope of heaven ; and what can be the consequence but the most agonizing fear ? With the view of heaven and hell perpetually before their eyes, and a strong belief that the obtaining the one and avoiding the other depends on the performance of a multitude of self-imposed duties, as complicated and more difficult than those of the ceremonial law of the Jews ; what can be the result but distracting anxiety ? When a Protestant is conscious that he does not make the doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ, a means to deceive himself and indulge his passions ; his trust in the “ full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world ” which was made on the cross, removes all fear from his soul. In his progress through the stormy sea of life, he does not, as the Romanist, cling with one hand to Christ, and depend on the strength of the other to break the waves. The poor deluded pupil of the Popish school, looks (as man always does in cases of great danger) not to the

stronger, but the weaker ground of his dependance for safety. Fear, consequently, predominates in his heart. "Mind your swimming hand," say his Priests; "ply it stoutly, or Christ will allow you to sink."—"Hold fast on Him who is powerful to save," says the Protestant Church in the language of the Bible: "all that you have to do, is to throw the weight of your sins and infirmities upon Christ." 'This is the only faith that can produce the fulness of "joy and hope in believing."

R. But are not good works necessary to salvation?

A. The truly Apostolic doctrine on that point will be best understood by looking to the direct consequence of sin. Besides, that the whole Scripture is full of loud warnings against wickedness, the Apostle expressly says: *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God! Be not deceived neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God**. So that there can be no doubt, that if we wish to be saved we must renounce sin, or as we are told by our Saviour, we must repent; that is, as the original word expresses it, we must *change the mind* from the pursuit of unrighteousness. By turning away from sin and placing our full trust or faith in Christ, we are pardoned, and become justified in the sight of God. We then are made living branches of the true vine, and the spiritual life which we receive from the trunk, cannot fail to produce fruit unto life eternal. Here then is the essential difference between the Protestant and the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification. The Roman Catholic believes that his good works are, in part at least, the means of his justification, and is anxious to secure and in-

* 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

crease it by numerous external practices, especially by self-inflicted misery: the true Protestant feels assured on the strength of revelation, that as he turns with his whole heart, and accepts pardon through Christ's blood, his sins are pardoned without reserve. The work of justification, or acquittal, is thereby perfect; and the Spirit of Christ proceeds without delay in the subsequent work of sanctification. The Protestant has but one ground of salutary fear, lest he should wilfully and deliberately turn again from Christ to sin; but this fear is allayed by the certainty given him by the same Scripture, that God is faithful, and that it is God "who worketh in us both to will and to do, of his good pleasure *."—The system of Popish justification is, I repeat to you, in the words of that truly great and calumniated man, Luther, "a plain tyranny, a racking and crucifying of consciences." He knew this from his own experience, for, like myself, he had in his youth tried it in the full sincerity of his heart. In order to secure his salvation, and following the advice of the Church of Rome he made himself a Monk, and most conscientiously kept the rule of his order; but he found, what I have frequently seen in those who bind themselves with the Popish vows, that he was on the way to distraction and downright madness. "When I was a Monk," he says, "I endeavoured as much as possible to live after the strait rule of my own order; I was wont to shrive (confess) myself with great devotion, and to reckon up all my sins, being always very contrite before, and I returned to confession very often, and thoroughly performed the penance that was enjoined unto me: yet for all this my conscience could never be fully certified, but was always in doubt, and said this or that thou hast not done rightly: thou wast not contrite and sorrowful enough: this

sin thou didst omit in thy confession, and so forth. Therefore, the more I went about to help my weak, wavering, and afflicted conscience by men's traditions, the more weak, and doubtful, and the more afflicted I was. And thus, the more I observed men's traditions, the more I transgressed them, and in seeking after righteousness, by mine order, I could never attain unto it.'—To the truth of this statement I myself can bear most ample testimony. In fact, with the exception of the persecuting spirit of the Church of Rome, I know nothing more odious and mischievous than her contrivances after the righteousness or sanctity which she recommends; they are indeed *a plain tyranny, a racking and crucifying of the conscience.*

R. What contrivances do you mean?

A. I mean the Popish laws, by which, in order, as they say, to make their Clergy more perfect, men are led into the most fatal snares, even to the loss of their souls, or at least to the ruin of their happiness. It is, indeed, a consequence of the Romanist doctrine of good works, or works through which men acquire a title to salvation, that they should lay intolerable burthens on the neck of well-disposed Christians. Hence the Pope has made it necessary for his Clergy never to marry; and for both men and women who, striving after the imaginary perfection of works, make themselves Monks, or Friars, or Nuns, to make vows of never marrying, of obeying the superior of their convents, and possessing no money. They also oblige themselves to keep the rule of their order, which gives forty or fifty commandments, besides those of God; and which, by their vows, they consider as binding as if they were all in the Bible. As far as this goes, such a system would be a dangerous absurdity: for what can be more unreasonable than to endanger salvation by self-imposed duties, when we know how difficult it is for man to keep the plain laws of God? But as the

object of all these human ordinances is, that the Church of Rome may be able to make an external show of the sanctity of her unmarried Priests, and the self-denial of her professed Monks and Nuns; the Popes, fearing lest those who undertake these duties, should soon find them impracticable, and shame the Church by resuming their Christian liberty—the Popes, I say, most unfeelingly, and with the greatest disregard of men's salvation, have induced all Roman Catholic Governments to force Clergymen, Friars, and Nuns, to abide by their profession; so that whoever finds himself unable to live in celibacy, or within the walls of a convent, must fly his country, under the dreadful certainty that, if taken in the attempt, he shall be punished with a cruel imprisonment during the rest of his life.

R. That is certainly a piece of tyranny which I have not sufficient words to describe.

A. You would, indeed, want words to express your feelings, if you had seen the effects of that proud and insolent despotism of the Romish Church, as I have. Indeed I am touching upon a subject of which I cannot speak without the most lively pain and indignation. When St. Paul enumerates the advantages which the unmarried Christians had in the early days of the Gospel, he uses the greatest caution. “This (says the Apostle) I speak for your own profit, not that I may cast a snare upon you.” The Church of Rome, on the contrary, carried away by her pride, uses every art to induce young persons of either sex to bind themselves with religious vows of chastity for life. All her books of devotion, and especially her established Prayer-book, are full of the praises of virginity. She carries her absurd, not to say wicked, extravagance, to the point of asserting of one of her female Saints, (Saint Rose of Lima, whom I have already mentioned) that she made a vow of perpetual chastity at the age of five years. There was indeed a time, when

children were bound by their parents to become Monks and Nuns for life; an engagement which they were forced to keep when they grew up. But now the Church of Rome allows boys and girls of sixteen to take the religious vows, and having done so, she puts them under the guard of the Roman Catholic Governments, who, frightened with the spiritual threats of the Popes, employ their force to make them prisoners of the Church for life. It would make your very heart sick to see the nunneries abroad. They are large houses, with high walls like prisons; having small windows at a great distance from the ground, and guarded by strong and close iron bars, bristled over with long spikes. As it is the custom among Roman Catholics to send most of their little girls to be educated by the Nuns, the poor innocents become attached to their teachers, who are besides exceedingly anxious to gain recruits to their order. The girls are petted till they come of age to take the vows. The Priests, who, being not allowed to marry, feel a strong jealousy of those who take a young and amiable wife, are always ready to advise their young penitents to take the veil. In this manner a great number of unsuspecting girls are yearly entrapped in the Roman Catholic Church. Even in England, Nunneries have been on the increase of late years. Some of these poor prisoners continue in their slavery without reluctance: many feel unhappy, but submit from the shame of changing their minds, and because even in this country, where the Protestant law would protect their leaving the convent, their relations would look upon them as reprobates, and their Priests would harass them to death. In Roman Catholic countries, the hopelessness of their case obliges many to bear their unhappy lot patiently. But some are driven to desperation, and I have known instances which prove that the Pope is a more unfeeling tyrant than any slave-master in Algiers.

R. Have you really seen a poor female dying for liberty, and yet kept like a criminal in bondage?

A. I have known many; but there was one among those unhappy victims, whose sufferings harrow my mind and heart whenever they come to my recollection. You must, however, be made acquainted with her melancholy story; but to save myself the pain of telling it anew, let me read it out of my *Evidence against Catholicism*:

“ The eldest daughter of a family intimately acquainted with mine, was brought up in the convent of Saint Agnes at Seville, under the care of her mother’s sister, the abbess of that female community. The circumstances of the whole transaction were so public at Seville, and the subsequent judicial proceedings have given them such notoriety, that I do not feel bound to conceal names. *Maria Francisca Barreiro*, the unfortunate subject of this account, grew up, a lively and interesting girl, in the convent; while the younger sister enjoyed the advantages of an education at home. The mother formed an early design of devoting her eldest daughter to religion, in order to give her less attractive favourite a better chance of getting a husband: The distant and harsh manner with which she constantly treated *Maria Francisca*, attached the unhappy girl to her aunt by the ties of the most ardent affection. The time, however, arrived when it was necessary that she should either leave her, and endure the consequences of her mother’s aversion at home, or take the vows, and thus close the gates of the convent upon herself for ever. She preferred the latter course; and came out to pay the last visit to her friends. I met her, almost daily, at the house of one of her relations; where her words and manner soon convinced me that she was a victim of her mother’s designing and unfeeling disposition. The father was an excellent man, though timid and undecided. He feared his wife, and was in awe of the Monks; who, as usual,

were extremely anxious to increase the number of their female prisoners. Though I was aware of the danger which a man incurs in Spain, who tries to dissuade a young woman from being a Nun, humanity impelled me to speak seriously to the father, entreating him not to expose a beloved child to spend her life in hopeless regret for lost liberty. He was greatly moved by my reasons ; but the impression I made was soon obliterated. The day for Maria Francisca's taking the veil was at length fixed ; and though I had a most pressing invitation to be present at the ceremony, I determined not to see the wretched victim at the altar. On the preceding day, I was called from my stall at the Royal Chapel, to the confessional. A lady, quite covered by her black veil, was kneeling at the grate through which females speak to the confessor. As soon as I took my seat, the well-known voice of Maria Francisca made me start with surprise. Bathed in tears, and scarcely able to speak without betraying her state to the people who knelt near the confessional box, by the sobs which interrupted her words ; she told me she wished only to unburden her heart to me, before she shut herself up for life. Assistance, she assured me, she would not receive ; for rather than live with her mother, and endure the obloquy to which her swerving from her announced determination would expose her, ' she would risk the salvation of her soul.' All my remonstrances were in vain. I offered to obtain the protection of the Archbishop, and thereby to extricate her from the difficulties in which she was involved. She declined my offer, and appeared as resolute as she was wretched. The next morning she took the veil ; and professed at the end of the following year. Her good aunt died soon after ; and the nuns, who had allured her into the convent by their caresses, when they perceived that she was not able to disguise her misery, and feared that the existence of a reluctant nun might

by her means transpire, became her daily tormentors.

“ After an absence of three years from Seville, I found that Maria Francisca had openly declared her aversion to a state, from which nothing but death could save her. She often changed her confessors, expecting comfort from their advice. At last she found a friend in one of the companions of my youth; a man whose benevolence surpasses even the bright genius with which nature has gifted him: though neither has been able to exempt him from the evils to which Spaniards seem to be fated in proportion to their worth. He became her confessor, and in that capacity spoke to her daily. But what could he do against the inflexible tyranny in whose grasp she languished !

“ About this time the approach of Napoleon’s army threw the town into a general consternation, and the convents were opened to such of the nuns as wished to fly. Maria Francisca, whose parents were absent, put herself under the protection of a young prebendary of the Cathedral, and by his means reached Cadiz, where I saw her, on my way to England. I shall never forget the anguish with which, after a long conversation wherein she disclosed to me the whole extent of her wretchedness, she exclaimed *There is no hope for me !* and fell into convulsions.

“ The liberty of Spain from the French invaders was the signal for the fresh confinement of this helpless young woman to her former prison. Here she attempted to put an end to her sufferings by throwing herself into a deep well; but was taken out alive. Her mother was now dead, and her friends instituted a suit of *nullity of profession*, before the ecclesiastical court. But the laws of the council of Trent were positive; and she was cast in the trial. Her despair, however, exhausted the little strength which her protracted sufferings had left

her, and the unhappy Maria Francisca died soon after, having scarcely reached her twenty-fifth year."

R. Sir, the history of your unfortunate friend is so horrible, that I wonder how whole nations can conspire to support a tyranny wicked enough to sacrifice not only the body but the soul of the helpless creatures who fall into its snares. I know that God is infinitely merciful; but does it not strike you that the Pope and his Church, provided they keep their slaves, do not care if they are driven to suicide, and all the sins which follow and attend despair?

A. I know that the Pope and his Counsellors are perfectly indifferent about moral evils which arise from the laws which keep up the appearance of infallibility in their Church. Rather than alter her law of celibacy, Rome has allowed her Clergy to be for many ages exposed to the most fatal temptations; and for the most part to be involved in the guilt of many a secret, and many an open sin, which might be avoided by the repeal of that law.

R. Does not the Pope ever dispense with the law of celibacy?

A. Rome, my friend, never draws back but when fear compels her. The only dispensation I ever heard of, was obtained by Buonaparte for Talleyrand, a French Bishop. The whole history of Papal Rome proves, that nothing but absolute compulsion will ever make her change her conduct. Even when the Popes have been forced to yield to necessity, they have always done it in sullen silence, and never by publicly disclaiming even their most unjustifiable and tyrannical laws. At this moment, when the Pope knows that by a short declaration he should instantly remove all the difficulties which oppose the termination of what is called the Catholic Question, and dispel the well-grounded fears which most Protestants have of the admission of Roman Catholics to seats in Parliament,—the Pope

lets them struggle on towards the object of their ambition: with the view, no doubt, of reminding them, in case they should gain the point, that it is the duty of every spiritual son of Rome, to exert himself in the destruction of Protestantism, and consequently so to behave themselves in Parliament, as to undermine the foundations of every Christian denomination which does not acknowledge the Pope as the Vicar of Christ on earth.

R. I know, Sir, many Roman Catholics who are most excellent people, and who appear to bear no malice against the religion of their neighbours.

A. I have no doubt that there are many such persons among them: but am equally certain, that every spiritual subject of the Pope is bound to oppose Protestantism, by the same conscientious principle which makes him a Roman Catholic. Why is he a Romanist? Because he thinks the Pope's religion the safest way to save his soul.—Would he then endanger that soul by acting against the principles of that religion, merely for the sake of the Protestants?

R. I wish you would tell me the real belief of the Church of Rome with regard to Protestants.

A. The Church of Rome declares as positively as she does the doctrine of the Trinity, and the Death and Resurrection of our Saviour, that there is no salvation out of her pale; that is to say, that the promises of the Gospel are exclusively made to those who acknowledge the Pope as the representative of Christ. This doctrine has been repeatedly established by the highest authority of the Church of Rome, which is the Pope and his Bishops met in council. The same authority has declared and bound all Roman Catholics to believe, that every person who has received baptism, either in their Church or out of it, is obliged *to obey all the precepts of the holy Church, either written or delivered by tradition; and that whoever denies that such bap-*

tized persons should not be forced to obey those precepts by any other punishment than that of excommunication, is to be accursed. Such is the declaration of the Council of Trent*, whose infallibility no Roman Catholic can disbelieve. He is therefore *accursed* by the Church of Rome who supports religious toleration. Nothing, consequently, can be more evident, than that sincere Roman Catholics are bound to be intolerant; for the Roman Catholic religion does not consist only in believing certain doctrines, but in believing them in obedience to that Church of which the Pope is the head. The sincere Roman Catholic cannot therefore explain away the practical consequences of his creed. He believes what his Church believes: his Church believes that whoever denies that baptized persons should be forced to obey the traditions of Rome, is accursed; he must therefore deem himself *accursed* if he omits any opportunity of forcing people into the Romish communion. Besides, if you see the Roman Catholics incessantly at work to make converts by persuasion, because their Church declares it to be their duty to snatch the souls of Protestants from eternal damnation; how can you suppose that, if they had power, they would not use it for the same purpose and under the same authority? But we are not left to inferences and conjectures upon this subject. The Church of Rome is so fully determined to impress upon her children their duty of forcing Romanism upon all who may be under their influence, that she enjoins that intolerant principle under an oath. The most solemn declaration of the Romanist Faith ends in words which, translated into English, are as follow: “*This true Catholic Faith, out of which none can be saved, which I now freely profess and truly hold, I promise, vow, and swear, to retain (with God’s assist-*

* Session VII. Canon IV. and XIV.

ance) whole and entire to my life's end, and to procure, to the extent of my power, that all my subjects, or those who, by virtue of my office, may be under my care, shall hold, teach, and preach the same." This oath was framed by the Council of Trent, with a determination to tender it to all persons in power; and is taken, even in this Protestant kingdom, by all Romanist Bishops and dignitaries. If this be not a proof, that checking and opposing every religion but that of the Pope, is considered a strict duty by the Church of Rome, all sound reasoning is at an end.

R. Do you suppose that any free-born Briton could approve of any thing like the Inquisition?

A. I have a very high opinion of the British character; but, on the other hand, I am too well acquainted with the baneful effects of the Roman Catholic religion upon the mind. I hope that few among the subjects of Great Britain are, in their hearts, abettors of that darling of the Romish Church—the Inquisition. But I know, that a dignified Spanish Clergyman, who was in London a few years ago, met with English Roman Catholics who declared their approbation of the Inquisition. In the preface to a history of that infamous tribunal, which he published in the year 1818, he has the words which I am going to give you translated from the French; "*During my residence in London, I heard some Roman Catholics say, that the Inquisition was useful in Spain for the preservation of the Catholic Faith; and that it would have been well for France if it had had a similar establishment*.*" This he asserts, not to attack the Roman Catholics, for he died in the communion of their Church, but as a simple fact, and by the way.

R. I am quite surprised!

* Llorente's History of the Spanish Inquisition. Paris edition, 1818, vol. I. p. xxii.

A. I am not surprised at all. It is when I hear of Roman Catholics who engage not to persecute Protestants, even if they had the power, that I am seized with astonishment. How can the spiritual children of Rome be so unlike their mother! Was it not the Church of Rome that, in Spain, urged the burning of *thirty-one thousand nine hundred and twelve* dissenters from her doctrines, and that punished with imprisonment, fine, confiscation, and public infamy, *two hundred and ninety-one thousand four hundred and fifty*, who saved their lives by recantation? Was it not by the same authority that in this kingdom of England, and during the four years of the reign of Queen Mary, *two hundred and eighty* persons were burnt alive; the number of those who perished in prison, for not turning Papists, being unknown? If this sanguinary Church acknowledged her error, if she confessed that she was misled by the ignorance and bigotry of old times, (though she herself had undoubtedly caused the ignorance and bigotry) we might believe that her children had also put off their persecuting character. But when has mortal man heard that the Church of Rome ever whispered a regret for the torrents of blood with which she has drenched the earth? Her Spanish Inquisition existed till within the last five years. The Pope restored it in 1814, and his Bishops are at this moment doing every thing to revive it. But what is the existence or abolition of the Inquisition, but a mere external symptom of power or want of it, to put the invariable principle of Romanist intolerance into practice? The cruel deeds of the Romish Church are nothing but a republication, in blood, of the articles of her Faith stamped in every copy of the decrees of Trent. How then can I believe that sincere Roman Catholics have renounced persecution? When a man's hopes of eternal happiness are bound up in a persecuting creed, he may indulge in toleration as he

does in sin, under a sense of spiritual danger, and a hope of future amendment: in the hey-day of life he will be for letting every man have his way; but I would not trust my liberty and my life into his hands, differing, as I do, from his creed, when he turns his thoughts to religion, and begins his course of Romish repentance.

R. I had never till now believed that intolerance and persecution could be taught by Christians as necessary for salvation.

A. One benefit, I trust in God's grace, you will at least derive from the clear proofs I have given you, that such is the doctrine of the Church of Rome. Convinced as you must be, that she makes persecution an essential part of her creed, you will bear that fact in mind, if ever her emissaries should try their arts to seduce you from your Protestant profession. Whenever you shall hear the often-told story of St. Peter and his Primacy, you have only to remember the tyrannous doctrine and conduct of the Popes which have grown out of that threadbare fiction. Compare the government of the pretended successors of Peter, with the model of a Christian Pastor, which Peter himself has left in his first Epistle. "Feed," he says, "the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, NOT BY CONSTRAINT, but willingly; not for FILTHY LUCRE, but of a ready mind; NEITHER AS BEING LORDS OVER GOD'S HERITAGE, but by being ensamples to the flock*." There needs not much learning to rebut all the pretensions of the Romish Church, when you compare her Popish government with this passage. You have only to remember the constraint and bloodshed by which the Popes obtained at one time the *oversight* of the flock of God: the *filthy lucre* which at this very day is the effect of their indulgences and dispensations; and lastly, to observe the

* 1 Peter v. 2, 3.

lordly manner in which they still claim the spiritual dominion of this and all other countries which have shaken off their tyrannical and usurped authority. Remember all this, and beware, my friend, of the guiles and arts of a Church, which, even at this moment, looks upon you and your brother Protestants as runaway slaves, whom she does not punish, from mere want of power; and rest assured, that where there is so much spirit of pride and ambition, the Christian spirit must have been nearly quenched.

THE END.

